UNISA Research Writing Resource

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Section 1: Mechanics of Writing-Basic Grammar

1.1 Introduction

The basic mechanics of writing is critical to good writing and research for several reasons. First, no one will really understand what you're trying to say in your research unless your writing is clear. Clarity in writing begins with selecting the right words, using the right grammar with the right tone. Second, understanding the parts of speech and writing is the starting point in learning more advanced writing skills. If you don't understand the difference between an adjective and an adverb, or the difference between a preposition and a conjunction, it will not only be difficult to correct mistakes in stringing words in a sentence, it will be difficult to appreciate the finer points of good writing.

In this resource, examples are highlighted with a light green background and an arrowhead sign. Poor examples are tagged with a hash symbol (#) to distinguish them from good examples. Italics or bold fonts may be applied to point to different parts of the sentence or different elements of grammar or sentence structure.

> ➤ #This is a *poor* **example**
>
> ➤ This is a *good* **example**

1.2 Parts of Speech

Traditional grammar recognizes eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. Many words can function as more than one part of speech. For example, depending on its use in a sentence, the word paint can be a noun (The paint is wet) or a verb (Please paint the ceiling next).

1.2.1 Nouns

A noun is a part of speech that denotes a person, animal, place, thing, or idea. In a sentence, nouns answer the questions who and what. The English word noun has its roots in the Latin word *nomen,* which means "name." Every language has words that are nouns. A plural noun is a word that indicates that there is more than one person, animal place, thing, or idea. When you talk about more than one of anything, you're using plural nouns. When you write about more than one of anything, you usually use the same word, simply adding an s, es, or ies to the end. There are a few exceptions to this rule, but not many – one of the best is that a single moose is a moose, and a group of moose are still moose. Nouns have several important functions. While it's impossible to list them all here, we'll go over the most important jobs nouns are tasked with.

Nouns are subjects. Every sentence has a subject, which is a noun that tells us what that sentence is all about. Subjects and objects are italicized in the following examples.

> ➢ *John* swung the baseball bat.

Nouns are direct objects. These nouns receive action from verbs.

> ➢ John swung the *baseball bat*.

Nouns are indirect objects. These nouns receive the direct object.

> ➢ Brad threw *John* the ball.

1.2.1.1   Abstract Nouns

A noun may be concrete (something you can touch, see, etc.), like the nouns in the example above, or a noun may be abstract (an idea), as in the sentences below.

> ➢ She possesses *integrity*.

> ➢ He was searching for *love*.

You can't see, taste, touch, smell, or hear something named with an abstract noun. More abstract noun examples are included in the following sentences.

> ➢ *Success* seems to come easily to certain people.
>
> ➢ His *hatred* of people smoking indoors is legendary.
>
> ➢ This is of great *importance*.
>
> ➢ He received an award for his *bravery*

The abstract concepts of *integrity*, *love, success, hatred, importance* in the sentences above are both nouns.

1.2.1.2   Proper nouns

Nouns may also be proper. Proper nouns name specific one-of-a-kind items, and they begin with capital letters, no matter where they occur within a sentence.

> ➢ She visited *Chicago* every year.
>
> ➢ *Thanksgiving* is in *November*.

Chicago, *Thanksgiving*, and *November* are all proper nouns, and they should be capitalized.

1.2.1.3   Collective nouns

Most nouns have singular and plural forms; collective nouns may be either singular or plural, depending on how they are used. One way of determining which nouns take singular and plural forms is to categorize them as countable or uncountable. Anything that can be counted, whether singular – a dog, a house, a friend, etc. or plural – a few books, lots of oranges, etc. is a countable noun. The following countable noun examples will help you to see the difference between countable and uncountable nouns. Notice that singular verbs are used with singular countable nouns, while plural verbs are used with plural countable nouns.

> ➤ There are at least twenty Italian *restaurants* in Little Italy.

> ➤ Megan took a lot of *photographs* when she went to the Grand Canyon.

> ➤ Your *book* is on the kitchen table

> ➤ How many *candles* are on that birthday cake?

> ➤ You have several *paintings* to study in art appreciation class.

> ➤ There's a big brown *dog* running around the neighborhood.

Anything that cannot be counted is an uncountable noun. Even though uncountable nouns are not individual objects, they are always singular and one must always use singular verbs in conjunction with uncountable nouns. The following uncountable noun examples will help you to gain even more understanding of how countable and uncountable nouns differ from one another. Notice that singular verbs are always used with uncountable nouns.

There is no more *water* in the pond.

> ➤ Please help yourself to some *cheese*.

> ➤ I need to find *information* about Pulitzer Prize winners.

> ➤ You seem to have a high level of *intelligence*.

> ➤ Please take good care of your *equipment*.

> ➤ Let's get rid of the *garbage*.

Uncountable nouns can be paired with words expressing plural concept. Using these words can make your writing more specific. Here are some examples of how to format interesting sentences with uncountable nouns.

> ➤ Garbage – There are nine bags of garbage on the curb.

- ➢ Water – Try to drink at least eight glasses of water each day.

- ➢ Advice – She gave me a useful piece of advice.

- ➢ Bread – Please buy a loaf of bread.

- ➢ Furniture – A couch is a piece of furniture.

- ➢ Equipment – A backhoe is an expensive piece of equipment.

- ➢ Cheese – Please bag ten slices of cheese for me.

Collective nouns such as *jury, committee, audience, crowd, troop, family,* and *couple* name a class or a group. Collective nouns are words for single things that are made up of more than one person, animal, place, thing, or idea. You can't have a team without individual members; even so, we discuss a team as a single entity. In American English, collective nouns are nearly always treated as singular: They emphasize the group as a unit. Occasionally, when there is some reason to draw attention to the individual members of the group, a collective noun may be treated as plural.

Here's a simple trick you can use to decide how to use collective nouns in sentences: Imagine a herd of zebras grazing peacefully on the savanna. Suddenly, a lion jumps out of a clump of tall grass. What do the zebras do? They run away as a single unit as they attempt to make a getaway, galloping across the savanna in the same direction. Often, people behave in the same way, engaging in a single activity in unison with everyone else in their group. When individuals are in a team, a choir, a committee, or part of any other collective noun, that noun is singular and is paired with singular pronouns and singular verbs. As you read the examples that follow, notice that each individual who is part of the collective noun is doing the same action at the same time as others who are part of that collective noun.

- ➢ Every morning, the herd follows its leader to the watering hole for a drink.

→ Herd is a singular collective noun. Follows is a singular verb, and the word its is a singular pronoun. All the animals in the herd arrive at the watering hole at the same time.

> ➤ Today, Ms. Kennedy's class takes its SOL test.

→ Class is a singular collective noun. Takes is a singular verb, and the word its is a singular pronoun. All the students in Ms. Kennedy's class are taking the same test at the same time.

> ➤ The committee agrees that people are misusing their cell phones, so its verdict is that phones must not be used during working hours.

→ Committee is a singular collective noun. Agrees is a singular verb, and the word its is a singular pronoun. All the members of the committee are thinking alike.

1.2.1.4 Compound nouns

Compound nouns are words for people, animals, places, things, or ideas, made up of two or more words. Most compound nouns are made with nouns that have been modified by adjectives or other nouns. In many compound nouns, the first word describes or modifies the second word, giving us insight into what kind of thing an item is, or providing us with clues about the item's purpose. The second word usually identifies the item. Compound nouns are sometimes one word, like toothpaste, haircut, or bedroom. These are often referred to as closed or solid compound nouns. Sometimes compound nouns are connected with a hyphen: dry-cleaning, daughter-in-law, and well-being are some examples of hyphenated compound nouns.

Sometimes compound nouns appear as two separate words: full moon, Christmas tree, and swimming pool are some examples of compound nouns that are formed with two separate words. These are often referred to as open or spaced compound nouns. In the following examples, compound noun have been italicized for easy identification.

Compound nouns can be made with two nouns:

> ➤ Let's just wait at this *bus stop*.

> ➤ I love watching *fireflies* on warm summer nights.

> ➤ While you're at the store, please pick up some *toothpaste*, a six-pack of *ginger ale*, and some *egg rolls*.

1.2.2 Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence.

> ➤ *She* decided to go to a movie.

In the sentence above, *she* is the pronoun. Like nouns, pronouns may be used either as subjects or as objects in a sentence.

> ➤ *She* planned to ask *him* for an interview.

In the example above, both *she* and *him* are pronouns; *she* is the subject of the sentence while *him* is the object. Every subject pronoun has a corresponding object form, as shown in the table below.

Subject and Object Pronouns	
Subject Pronouns	*Object Pronouns*
I	Me
We	Us
You	You
She	Her
He	Him

It	It
They	Them

Usually the pronoun substitutes for a specific noun, known as its antecedent. Good writing practice demands that the pronoun and its noun be clearly specified. Poorly placed pronouns can change or destroy the meaning of a sentence.

Pronouns are classified as personal, possessive, intensive and reflexive, relative, interrogative, demonstrative, indefinite, and reciprocal.

1.2.2.1 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to specific persons or things. They always function as noun equivalents.

Singular: *I, me, you, she, her, he, him, it*

Plural: *we, us, you, they, them*

1.2.2.2 Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns indicate ownership.

Singular: *my, mine, your, yours, her, hers, his, its*

Plural: *our, ours, your, yours, their, theirs*

Some of these possessive pronouns function as adjectives modifying

nouns: *my, your, her, his, its, our, their*.

1.2.2.3 Intensive and reflexive pronouns

Intensive pronouns emphasize a noun or another pronoun

> The senator *herself* met us at the door

Reflexive pronouns, which have the same form as intensive pronouns, name a receiver of an action identical with the doer of the action

> Paula cut *herself*

Singular: *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself*

Plural: *ourselves, yourselves, themselves*

1.2.2.4 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns introduce subordinate clauses functioning as adjectives

> The writer *who won the award* refused to accept it.

In addition to introducing the clause, the relative pronoun (in

this case *who*) points back to a noun or pronoun that the clause modifies (writer).

Examples include *who, whom, whose, which, that*

1.2.2.5 Interrogative pronouns

Interrogative pronouns introduce questions

> *Who* is expected to win the election?

Examples include *who, whom, whose, which, what*

1.2.2.6 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns identify or point to nouns. Frequently they function as adjectives

> *This* chair is my favorite

but they may also function as noun equivalents

> ➤ *This* is my favorite chair

Examples include *this, that, these, those*

1.2.2.7 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to nonspecific persons or things. Most are always singular (*everyone, each*); some are always plural (*both, many*); a few may be singular or plural.

Most indefinite pronouns function as noun equivalents (*Something* is burning), but some can also function as adjectives

> ➤ *All* campers must check in at the lodge

Examples include *all anything everyone nobody several another both everything none some any each few no one somebody anybody either many nothing someone anyone everybody neither one something*

1.2.2.8 Reciprocal pronouns

Reciprocal pronouns refer to individual parts of a plural antecedent (By turns, the penguins fed *one another*).

Example include *each other, one another*

1.2.3 Article

An article is an adjective. Like adjectives, articles modify nouns. English has two articles: *the* and *a/an*. The is used to refer to specific or particular nouns; a/an is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns. We call *the* the definite article and *a/an* the indefinite article.

the = definite article

a/an = indefinite article

For example, if I say, "Let's read *the* book," I mean a specific book. If I say, "Let's read *a* book," I mean any book rather than a specific book.

Here's another way to explain it: The is used to refer to a specific or particular member of a group. For example, "I just saw *the* most popular movie of the year." There are many movies, but only one particular movie is the most popular. Therefore, we use *the*.

"A/an" is used to refer to a non-specific or non-particular member of the group. For example, "I would like to go see *a* movie." Here, we're not talking about a specific movie. We're talking about any movie. There are many movies, and I want to see any movie. I don't have a specific one in mind.

Let's look at each kind of article a little more closely.

1.2.3.1   Indefinite Articles: a and an

"A" and "an" signal that the noun modified is indefinite, referring to any member of a group. For example:

"My daughter really wants *a* dog for Christmas." This refers to any dog. We don't know which dog because we haven't found the dog yet.

"Somebody call *a* policeman!" This refers to any policeman. We don't need a specific policeman; we need any policeman who is available.

"When I was at the zoo, I saw *an* elephant!" Here, we're talking about a single, non-specific thing, in this case an elephant. There are probably several elephants at the zoo, but there's only one we're talking about here.

Remember, using a or an depends on the sound that begins the next word. So...

a + singular noun beginning with a consonant: a boy; a car; a bike; a zoo; a dog

an + singular noun beginning with a vowel: an elephant; an egg; an apple; an idiot; an orphan

a + singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: a user (sounds like 'yoo-zer,' i.e. begins with a consonant 'y' sound, so 'a' is used); a university; a unicycle

an + nouns starting with silent "h": an hour

a + nouns starting with a pronounced "h": a horse

In some cases where "h" is pronounced, such as "historical," you can use an. However, a is more commonly used and preferred.

> A historical event is worth recording.

Remember that these rules also apply when you use acronyms:

> Introductory Composition at Purdue (ICaP) handles first-year writing at the University. Therefore, an ICaP memo generally discusses issues concerning English 106 instructors.

Another case where this rule applies is when acronyms start with consonant letters but have vowel sounds:

> An MSDS (material safety data sheet) was used to record the data. An SPCC plan (Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures plan) will help us prepare for the worst.

If the noun is modified by an adjective, the choice between a and an depends on the initial sound of the adjective that immediately follows the article:

> a broken egg

> an unusual problem

> a European country (sounds like 'yer-o-pi-an,' i.e. begins with consonant 'y' sound)

Remember, too, that in English, the indefinite articles are used to indicate membership in a group:

> ➤ I am a teacher. (I am a member of a large group known as teachers.)
>
> ➤ Brian is an Irishman. (Brian is a member of the people known as Irish.)
>
> ➤ Seiko is a practicing Buddhist. (Seiko is a member of the group of people known as Buddhists.)

1.2.3.2   Definite Article: the

The definite article is used before singular and plural nouns when the noun is specific or particular. The signals that the noun is definite, that it refers to a particular member of a group. For example:

"The dog that bit me ran away." Here, we're talking about a specific dog, the dog that bit me.

"I was happy to see the policeman who saved my cat!" Here, we're talking about a particular policeman. Even if we don't know the policeman's name, it's still a particular policeman because it is the one who saved the cat.

"I saw the elephant at the zoo." Here, we're talking about a specific noun. Probably there is only one elephant at the zoo.

The can be used with non-countable nouns, or the article can be omitted entirely.

"I love to sail over *the* water" (some specific body of water) or "I love to sail over water" (any water). (notice that "a" is not used in the latter case)

"He spilled the milk all over the floor" (some specific milk, perhaps the milk you bought earlier that day) or "He spilled milk all over the floor" (any milk).

"A/an" can be used only with count nouns.

"I need a bottle of water."

"I need a new glass of milk."

Most of the time, you can't say, "She wants a water," unless you're implying, say, a bottle of water.

Geographical use of *the*

There are some specific rules for using the with geographical nouns.

Do not use *the* before:

- names of most countries/territories: Italy, Mexico, Bolivia; however, the Netherlands, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, the United States

- names of cities, towns, or states: Seoul, Manitoba, Miami

- names of streets: Washington Blvd., Main St.

- names of lakes and bays: Lake Titicaca, Lake Erie except with a group of lakes like the Great Lakes

names of mountains: Mount Everest, Mount Fuji except with ranges of mountains like the Andes or the Rockies or unusual names like the Matterhorn

- names of continents (Asia, Europe)

- names of islands (Easter Island, Maui, Key West) except with island chains like the Aleutians, the Hebrides, or the Canary Islands

Do use *the* before:

- names of rivers, oceans and seas: the Nile, the Pacific

- points on the globe: the Equator, the North Pole

- geographical areas: the Middle East, the West

- deserts, forests, gulfs, and peninsulas: the Sahara, the Persian Gulf, the Black Forest, the Iberian Peninsula

Omission of Articles

Some common types of nouns that don't take an article are:

- Names of languages and nationalities: Chinese, English, Spanish, Russian (unless you are referring to the population of the nation: "The Spanish are known for their warm hospitality.")

- Names of sports: volleyball, hockey, baseball

- Names of academic subjects: mathematics, biology, history, computer science

1.2.4 Verb

A verb is one of the main parts of a sentence or question in English and is the workhorse of any language. In fact, you can't have a sentence or a question without a verb! That's how important these "action" parts of speech are. The verb signals an action, an occurrence, or a state of being. Whether mental, physical, or mechanical, verbs always express activity.

1.2.4.1   Physical Verbs

Physical verbs are action verbs. They describe specific physical actions. If you can create a motion with your body or use a tool to complete an action, the word you use to describe it is most likely a physical verb.

Physical Verb Examples

The physical verb examples in the following sentences are italicized for easy identification.

➢ Let's *run* to the corner and back.

➢ I *hear* the train coming.

➢ *Call* me when you're finished with class.

1.2.4.2   Mental Verbs

Mental verbs have meanings that are related to concepts such as discovering, understanding, thinking, or planning. In general, a mental verb refers to a cognitive state.

> ➤ I *know* the answer.
>
> ➤ She *recognized* me from across the room.
>
> ➤ Do you *believe* everything people tell you?

1.2.4.3   States of Being Verbs or Being Verbs

That usually means that the word is a form of the verb be. Here are the forms of *be* (except for been and being, not one of them looks like be): *am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been*. These forms also include *has been, should have been, may be,* and *might be.* Also known as linking verbs, state of being verbs describe conditions or situations that exist. State of being verbs are inactive since no action is being performed. These verbs are usually complemented by adjectives.

> ➤ I *am* a student.
>
> ➤ We *are* circus performers.
>
> ➤ Please *be* quiet.

1.2.4.4   Linking Verbs

Action verbs that look like being verbs are also called linking verbs. They include words like:

appear feel look remain smell stay become grow prove seem sound taste all forms of *be* (*am is was were*)

The linking verb links the subject to a predicate nominative or predicate adjective - words that restate and refer to the subject: I am hungry - I = hungry. Hungry is a predicative adjective after

the linking verb, "am" and explains the subject. I am Bob - I = Bob. Bob is predicate nominative after the linking verb that restates the subject.

Later you will be introduced to the auxiliary verb, which is not the same as the linking verb. So, if the verb is connected to another verb, it's auxiliary:

> I am running.

Here, *running* is the main verb or action that the subject "I" is doing and "am" connects the subject to that main verb. If it connects the subject and a word that refers/explains the subject, it's a linking verb.

So when do these twelve verbs act as action verbs, and when are they linking verbs? Use this test:

If you can substitute a form of be (am, is, was, and so on) and the sentence still makes sense, you've got yourself a linking verb. Look at these examples.

> The soup tasted too spicy for me.

Substitute *was* or *is* for *tasted* and you have this sentence:

> The soup was (is) too spicy for me.

> It makes perfect sense.

Now look at this one:

> I tasted the spicy soup.

Substitute was or is for tasted and you have this sentence:

> I was (is) the spicy soup.

It doesn't make much sense, so you don't have a linking verb.

1.2.4.5   Intransitive Verbs

An intransitive verb names an action that has no direct impact on anyone or anything named in the predicate

> ➢ The Earth turns on its axis
>
> ➢ All symptoms of the disease vanished
>
> ➢ The volcano could erupt at any time

1.2.4.6   Transitive Verbs

A transitive verb names an action that directly affects a person or thing mentioned in the predicate. The word or phrase naming this person or thing is called a direct object

> ➢ An enthusiastic crowd greeted the president at the airport
>
> ➢ Gamblers lose money
>
> ➢ A fungus has been threatening maples in the region

1.2.4.7   Helping or Auxiliary Verbs

Another type of verb that may occur in a sentence is a helping or auxiliary verb. It can join the main verb (becoming the helper of the main verb) to express the tense, mood, and voice of the verb. Common helping verbs are *be* (including *am, is, was, were*), *do, have, can, may*, and so on. (The first two sentences of this paragraph have helping verbs: *may* and *can*, because they help the verbs *occur* and *join* respectively). They add functional or grammatical meaning to the clauses in which they appear. They perform their functions in several different ways:

- By expressing tense (providing a time reference, i.e. past, present, or future, e.g. *have, had, does, didn't*)

- Grammatical aspect (expresses how verb relates to the flow of time, e.g. *had*)

- Modality (quantifies verbs)

- Voice (describes the relationship between the action expressed by the verb and the participants identified by the verb's subject, object, etc.)

- Adds emphasis to a sentence

Other examples:

> *Does* Sam write all his own reports?

> The secretaries *haven't* written all the letters yet.

> Terry *is* writing an e-mail to a client at the moment.

Sometimes actions or conditions occur only one time and then they're over. It's at times like these that some of the same verbs that are used as auxiliary verbs are instead used as action or linking verbs. In this example, we see the word "is". This is one of the most common auxiliary verbs, but because it stands alone here, it is not functioning as an auxiliary verb.

> Jerry slammed the car door on his thumb. He *is* in horrible pain.

At other times, an action or condition is ongoing, happening predictably, or occurring in relationship to another event or set of events. In these cases, single-word verbs like is are not accurately capable of describing what happened, so phrases that include auxiliary verbs are used instead. These can be made up of anywhere from two to four words. A main verb, also known as a base verb, indicates the kind of action or condition taking place. An auxiliary or helping verb accompanies the main verb and conveys other nuances that help the reader gain specific insight into the event that is taking place.

In research, writers often overuse these helping verbs. It's common to read sentences in research papers replete with "have performed," "have completed" or "have studied." Authors think that replacing "is" or "are" with "have" improves writing, when in fact, they are all "be"

verbs. Overuse can result in "weak" and "ambiguous" writing. Replacing these "be" verbs with active verbs has many benefits:

- Writing is stronger/clearer.

- Writing is more descriptive.

- Vocabulary is expanded.

- Writing is less repetitive/more succinct

Compare these sentences and consider how stronger and succinct the sentence without the linking verb becomes:

> #Biology is interesting to me.

> Biology interests me.

> #My paper is an examination of gender.

> My paper examines gender.

> #The bell is a symbol of freedom.

> The bell symbolizes freedom.

Other ways include replacing the linking verbs with active physical verbs such as:

seem, appear, become, grow, remain, stay, prove, feel, look, smell.

> #He is angry

> He *appears* angry.

> #My argument is unchanged

> My argument *remains* unchanged.

> ➤ #The evidence is crucial

> ➤ The evidence becomes crucial.

Often the linking verb is part of a passive sentence. By changing the sentence to an active sentence, the linking verb can be eliminated.

> ➤ #My appendix was taken out by my doctor.

> ➤ My doctor took out my appendix

1.2.5 Adjective

An adjective is a word used to modify, or describe, a noun or pronoun. An adjective usually answers one of these questions relating to nouns: Which one? What kind of? How many? So essentially, the adjectives are words that describe or modify other words. They can identify or quantify another person or thing in the sentence. Adjectives are usually positioned before the noun or the pronoun that they modify.

> ➤ They live in a *beautiful* house.

> ➤ Lisa is wearing a *sleeveless* shirt today.

They may also follow linking verbs, in which case they describe the subject.

> ➤ The decision was *unpopular*.

The definite article *the* and the indefinite articles *a* and *an* are also classified as adjectives.

> ➤ *A* defendant should be judged on *the* evidence provided to *the* jury, not on hearsay.

Some possessive, demonstrative, and indefinite pronouns can function as adjectives: *their, its, this, all*, and so on. And nouns can function as adjectives when they modify other nouns: *apple pie*

Some adjectives can be identified by their endings. Typical adjective endings include:

-able/-ible understandable, capable, readable, incredible

-al mathematical, functional, influential, chemical

-ful beautiful, bashful, helpful, harmful

-ic artistic, manic, rustic, terrific

-ive submissive, intuitive, inventive, attractive

-less sleeveless, hopeless, groundless, restless

-ous gorgeous, dangerous, adventurous, fabulous

Adjectives can be formed from different words. They can be formed from nouns:

Noun	Adjective
accident	accidental
danger	dangerous

From verbs:

Verb	Adjective
enjoy	enjoyable
help	helpful
obey	obedient

Or even from other adjectives:

Adjective	Adjective
comic	comical
correct	corrective
elder	elderly

> ➢ Our house color is a kind of yellow. → We live in a yellowish house.
>
> ➢ He often acts like a child. → He often acts in a childish way.
>
> ➢ The event was a big success. → We enjoyed a successful event.
>
> ➢ We enjoyed the sound of the drum's rhythm. → We enjoyed the drum's rhythmic sound.

Adjectives usually precede the words they modify. They may also follow linking verbs, in which case they describe the subject.

> ➢ The decision was *unpopular*.
>
> ➢ The definite article the and the indefinite articles a and an are also classified as adjectives.
>
> ➢ *A* defendant should be judged on the evidence provided to *the* jury, not on hearsay.

Some possessive, demonstrative, and indefinite pronouns can function as adjectives: their, its, this, all, and so on. And nouns can function as adjectives when they modify other nouns: apple pie (the noun apple modifies the noun pie)

1.2.5.1 Modifier and Qualifier

A **modifier** is an optional element in phrase or clause. A modifier is so called because it is said to *modify* (change the meaning of) another element in the structure, on which it is dependent. Typically, the modifier can be removed without affecting the grammar of the sentence. For example, in the sentence *This is a red ball*, the adjective *red* is a modifier, modifying the noun *ball*. Removal of the modifier would leave *This is a ball*, which is grammatically correct and equivalent in structure to the original sentence. A modifier is often called a qualifier, although some would prefer to use adverbs as qualifiers.

A modifier or qualifier is not a complement in the sentence. Unlike modifiers and qualifiers, complements are a necessary part of the sentence and cannot be omitted. For example:

> ➢ This is a red ball
>
> ➢ This ball is painted red

In the first example, omitting red will still make the sentence whole. In the second example, omitting red, the complement, makes the sentence incomplete since red complements painted (it is a predicate adjective, a necessary part of the sentence).

Qualifiers and intensifiers are words or phrases that are added to another word to modify its meaning, either by limiting it (*He was **somewhat** busy*) or by enhancing it (*The dog was **very** cute*). Qualifiers can play an important role in your writing, giving your reader clues about how confident you feel about the information you're presenting. In fact, "hedging" (as it is sometimes called) is an important feature of academic writing, because academic writers need to clearly indicate whether they think claims are certain, likely, unlikely, or just false. But excessive use of qualifiers can make you sound unsure of your facts; it can also make your writing too informal.

Qualifiers are often necessary, such as when your evidence or your claim is open to doubt. In such cases, using a qualifier allows you to present your findings with what we can call "confident uncertainty," which reflects a need to be cautious and critical about the data you're presenting. Sometimes you may be required to present your ideas before you have had a chance to fully interpret your research findings. At other times, you may want to remind readers of the limitations of your particular research.

Here are some words and phrases that can help you indicate uncertainty:

Appears

Seems

Suggests

Indicates

It's also very important to distinguish between absolute or universal claims (in which you are asserting that something is true always and everywhere) and more particular claims (in which you are asserting something but recognizing that your claim has limits). **Let's take a look at some absolute words and some more qualified alternatives:**

ABSOLUTE	QUALIFIED
Will	May, might, could
Forms of "be" (am, is, are, was, were)	May be, might have been, may have been
All	Many, most, some, numerous, countless, a majority
Every	(Same as "all")
None/no	Few, not many, a small number, hardly any, a minority
Always	Often, frequently, commonly, for a long time, usually, sometimes, repeatedly
Never	Rarely, infrequently, sporadically, seldom
Certainly	Probably, possibly
Impossible	Unlikely, improbable, doubtful

1.2.5.2   Order of Adjectives

Let's start with an example.

> ➤ The **big green** tree blocked his view.

We know that this shouldn't be

> ➤ #The **green big** tree blocked his view.

But why not? Why can't we put adjectives in any order? We could say *the green elm tree blocked his view*, so why can't we write *the green big tree*?

We can't because there are rules, rules established from use and likely as a way of making communication easier. Those we communicate with, through either the spoken or the written word, will more easily understand when they don't have to figure out which words go with which others, which words *modify* which others. If they know and use the same rules we use, communication is clearer.

Adjectives fall into different categories, and it is those categories that have been given a particular order. So once you know the categories, it's much easier to decide on word order.

The nine categories—in order from those farthest from the noun when multiple adjectives are used to those closest to the noun—with examples—

Determiner—articles (a, an, the), possessives (your, his, her, my, their, our), number (ten, several, some), demonstratives (this, that, those, these)

Observation or Opinion—cold, ugly, tasty, heroic, retired, carefree, enthusiastic, soft, opinionated, priceless

Size—huge, minuscule, petite

Shape—square, oblong, circular

Age—ancient, old, young

Color—green, gray, yellow

Origin—British, Albanian, Hawaiian

Material—wooden, velvet, plastic, aluminum

<u>Qualifier</u>—typically a noun used as an adjective to identify the *type* of the noun—**hound** dog, **evening** gown, **bumper** crop—or an adjective ending in -ing that describes a noun's purpose—**adding** machine, **walking** stick, **marching** orders

Notes: 1. Size and shape are sometimes combined into one category.

2. Many, many adjectives are observation/opinion adjectives.

3. Qualifiers bump up next to the noun with nothing between them. The paired words are often open compounds.

Examples of nouns paired with multiple adjectives*—

a long blue velvet drape

the gnarled and hideous plastic tubing

a loose-fitting blue and green Hawaiian shirt

an unkempt, unconscious Russian tourist

some hard, tasteless, and stinky yellow candies

some hard, tasteless yellow candies

some hard yellow candies

Examples of incorrect adjective order—

➢ #a burlap ugly purse

➢ correct—an ugly burlap purse

➢ #two Spanish purple plums

➢ correct—two purple Spanish plums

➢ #that plastic key small ring

> ➤ correct—that small plastic key ring

There are exceptions to every rule. For the rule about adjective order, one exception is less exception than word choice and meaning.

In our example about plums, the word order makes sense—*two*, *purple,* and *Spanish* each independently modify *plums.* But if purple plum was a *type* of plum (as are cherry plum and sloe plum), with *purple* as the qualifier, then *two Spanish purple plums* would be correct.

Note: In this example, *Spanish* is simply an adjective signifying where the plum came from (an adjective of origin). It is not a qualifier naming the type of plum. There are, however, Chinese, Mexican, American, and Italian plums.

In the example of the *ugly burlap purse*, the order again makes sense because we wouldn't say *a burlap ugly purse*. Yet we might easily say *a big old ugly purse*. Why is that adjective order allowed?

Whether this exception comes from the use of *big old ugly* as a common unit rather than three separate adjectives or because *ugly* is being used as a type of purse, I can't tell you. Yet I can remind you that there are exceptions to be aware of.

Also, be mindful of that final modifier before the noun. Is it a qualifier or an observation/opinion adjective? You can use a comma to identify which you intend it to be. An example may be helpful.

One of the following sentences does not say the same thing as the others.

> ➤ The annual and week-long meeting was in September.
>
> ➤ The annual, week-long meeting was in September.
>
> ➤ The week-long and annual meeting was in September.
>
> ➤ The week-long, annual meeting was in September.

> ➢ The week-long annual meeting was in September.

In the first four sentences, the meeting is both annual and runs for a week. In the fifth sentence, the *annual meeting*, an entity in itself, runs for a week.

1.2.5.3 Comparative Adjectives

As well as serving as modifying words like beautiful and big, adjectives are also used for indicating the position on a scale of comparison. The lowest point on the scale is known as the absolute form, the middle point is known as the comparative form, and the highest point is known as the superlative form. Here are some examples:

Absolute	Comparative	Superlative
This book is long.	This book is longer than that book.	This is the longest book.
The airport is far.	The airport is farther than the train station.	This is the farthest airport.
My mom is a good cook.	My mom is a better cook than your mom.	My mom is the best cook.

When two objects or persons are being compared, the comparative form of the adjective is used. The comparative adjective can be formed in two ways:

  Adding –er to the absolute form of the adjective.

  Adding the word more before the adjective.

For example:

> ➢ My essay is longer than yours.
>
> ➢ She is more beautiful than her sister.

1.2.5.4   Compound Adjectives

A compound adjective is formed when two or more adjectives are joined together to modify the same noun. These terms should be hyphenated to avoid confusion or ambiguity. For example:

> ➤ Diana submitted a *6-page* document.
>
> ➤ She adopted a *two-year-old* cat.

1.2.6 Adverb

An adverb is a word used to modify, or qualify, a verb (or verbal), an adjective, or another adverb. It usually answers one of these questions relating to these words instead of nouns: When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? To what degree?

> ➤ Pull *firmly* on the emergency handle. [Pull how?]
>
> ➤ Read the text *first* and *then* work the exercises. [Read when? Work when?]
>
> ➤ *Yesterday* the *quite* relieved soldier *very quickly* ran out of the woods when he saw his comrade *frantically* waving at him.

The adverbs in that sentence are yesterday (modifies the verb ran), quite (modifies the adjective relieved), very (modifies the adverb quickly), quickly (modifies the verb ran), and frantically (modifies the verb waving).

Adverbs modifying adjectives or other adverbs usually intensify or limit the intensity of the word they modify.

> ➤ Be *extremely* kind, and you will *probably* have many friends.

The words *not* and *never* are classified as adverbs.

If you still need help finding adverbs, try this. Ask yourself if the word you're wondering about

answers one of these questions:

How? When? Where? Why? Under what circumstances? How much? How often? To what extent?

In the example above, *yesterday* answers the question when?; *quite* answers the question to what extent?; *very* answers the question to what extent? (or how much?) ; *quickly* answers the question how? (or to what extent?); and *frantically* answers the question how?

1.2.6.1 Conjunctive Adverbs

Conjunctive adverbs are in a category of their own. These words join independent clauses into one sentence. Some examples:

accordingly	however	nevertheless
also	incidentally	next
besides	indeed	otherwise
consequently	instead	still
finally	likewise	therefore
furthermore	meanwhile	thus
hence	moreover	

Use conjunctive adverbs to join short sentences into more complex thoughts; however (did you notice the conjunctive adverb there?), be sure that:

1. You have a complete thought on either side of the conjunctive adverb.

2. You put a semicolon before it and a comma after it.

3. You're joining two closely related thoughts.

4. You've used the right conjunctive adverb.

1.2.6.2 Using adverbs and adjectives for comparison

Earlier we touched on how comparative adjectives can be used compare different nouns. Adverbs can also be used to perform the same tasks. Some useful rules when using adjectives and adverbs for comparison include:

Rule #1. One-syllable adjectives and adverbs usually form their comparative form by adding –er and their superlative form by adding –est.

Rule #2. Adjectives of more than two syllables and adverbs ending in –l y usually form comparative forms by using more (or less) and superlative forms by using most (or least).

Absolute/Positive	Comparative	Superlative
awkwardly	more awkwardly	most awkwardly
comfortable	more comfortable	most comfortable
qualified	less qualified	least qualified

Rule #3. Confusion sometimes takes place in forming comparisons of words of two syllables only.

Here's the rub: Sometimes two-syllable words use the –er, est forms, and sometimes they use the more, most (or less, least) forms.

Absolute/Positive	Comparative	Superlative
sleepy	sleepier	sleepiest
tiring	more tiring	most tiring

So how do you know whether to use the –er, est form or the more, most form? You have to use a dictionary (a large dictionary, not a paperback one) if you're not sure. If there are no comparative or superlative forms listed in the dictionary, then use the more, most form.

There are a few exceptions to the above rules; these include:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
bad	worse	worst
far	farther/further	farthest/furthest
good	better	best
well	better	best
ill	worse	worst
little	littler/less/lesser	littlest/least
many	more	most
much	more	most
old (persons)	elder	eldest
old (things)	older	oldest

One common mistake in both writing and speaking is to use the superlative form when the comparative should be used. Remember that if you're comparing two persons, places, or things, you use only the comparative form (not the superlative). Look at this sentence:

Of my two dogs, the cocker spaniel is the friendliest.

The comparison is between only two (two dogs), so the sentences should be written with the comparative form (friendlier) instead of the superlative.

Another frequent mistake in comparisons is to use both the –er and more or –est and most forms with the same noun, as in the "most tallest" statue or a "more happier" child. Remember that one form is the limit. In the examples, most and more need to be eliminated.

Because some comparisons can be interpreted more than one way, be sure that you include all the words necessary to give the meaning you intend. Read this sentence:

In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than her teammate Sherry.

When the sentence is constructed that way, it isn't clear if the meaning is the following:

> ➤ In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than her teammate Sherry could.

or

> ➤ In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than she could beat her teammate Sherry.

1.2.6.3   Adverb clauses

An adverb clause is a group of words that is used to change or qualify the meaning of an adjective, a verb, a clause, another adverb, or any other type of word or phrase with the exception of determiners and adjectives that directly modify nouns.

Adverb clauses always meet three requirements:

- First, an adverb clause always contains a subject and a verb.

- Second, adverb clauses contain subordinate conjunctions that prevent them from containing complete thoughts and becoming full sentences.

- Third, all adverb clauses answer one of the classic "adverb questions:" When? Why? How? Where?

1.2.6.4 Differentiating adverbs from adjectives

Be sure to note the differences between the following examples:

"The dog smells clean." Here, clean describes the dog itself. It's not that he smells something clean; it's that he's had a bath and does not stink. Clean describes what kind of smell comes from the dog making it an adjective.

"The dog smells carefully." Here, carefully describes how the dog smells, making it an adverb. We imagine him sniffing cautiously.

Or:

"Kai dressed for the quick recital." Here, quick describes the noun, recital, making it an adjective. What kind of recital? A quick one.

"Kai dressed quickly for the recital." Quickly describes the way Kai dressed, making it an adverb because it modifies the verb dressed. How did Kai dress? Quickly.

Or:

"Look at the nice bed." Nice modifies the noun, bed, in this sentence, making it an adjective.

"Look at the nicely made bed." Nicely modifies the adjective, made, in this sentence, making it an adverb.

Or:

"Joseph seems strange and upset." Strange and upset modify the proper noun, Joseph, in this sentence, so strange and upset are both adjectives.

"Joseph seems strangely upset." Strangely modifies the adjective, upset, in this sentence, so strangely is an adverb.

In general, when a word has the ending "-ly," it will act as an adverb. Pay close attention to how the noun is modified, as this is the final criteria when deciding between an adjective and adverb.

1.2.7 Preposition

A preposition is a word that not only links a noun, pronoun or a phrase to some other word in a sentence, it is usually positioned (pre-position) before the noun, pronoun or phrase to modify that other word.

> ➢ Jack and Jill went *up* the hill.

Up is a preposition positioned before the noun *hill* and connects it to the verb *went*

> ➢ Little Jack Horner sat *in* a corner.

In is a preposition connecting the noun *corner* to the verb *sat.*

As a result, the phrase "up the hill" modifies the verb *went* since it becomes an adverb. Similarly, "in a corner" is an adverb that modifies the verb sat. Sometimes, people confuse these prepositions with conjunctions like "and," "but" and "or." The conjunction *and* also links nouns or phrases with some other word and appears before the noun, but it does not modify that word. Instead it creates a join with that word. Thus, in the sentence above, Jack and Jill are joined together by the conjunction "and." As a result, both of them went up the hill. Another way to view it is to create two separate sentences by splitting them using the conjunction. Thus, Jack went up the hill, and Jill went up the hill. Prepositions do not join words in this way, or split similar sentences.

Here's another example:

> ➢ The road *to* the summit travels *past* craters *from* an extinct volcano.

To the summit functions as an adjective modifying the noun road; *past craters* functions as an adverb modifying the verb travels; *from an extinct volcano* functions as an adjective modifying the noun craters. Thus, to, past and from are prepositions.

When these prepositions occur with an object, they are also called prepositional phrases. As we saw, prepositional phrases can act as adverbs or adjectives. When they are used as adjectives, they modify nouns and pronouns in the same way single-word adjectives do. When prepositional phrases are used as adverbs, they at the same way single-word adverbs and adverb clauses do, modifying adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs. Following are the most common prepositions.

about	concerning	outside
above	despite	over
across	down	past
after	during	since
against	except	through
along	for	throughout
among	from	to
around	in	toward
at	inside	under
before	into	underneath
behind	like	until
below	of	up
beneath	off	upon
beside	on	with
between	onto	within

beyond	out	without

As you can see, most of these prepositions describe location or position and that is one way of recognizing them.

You've heard the rule about never ending a sentence with a preposition, haven't you? Generally, your writing does sound better if you can structure a sentence so that you don't end with a preposition. However, sometimes you want a more colloquial or conversational tone, and—let's face it—in speaking, we often end sentences with prepositions. Would you be likely to say:

> ➢ With whom are you going to the party?

or

> ➢ Whom are you going to the party with?

The second way (with the preposition at the end) is almost always the way the sentence normally is said. (In fact, speakers usually use who instead of whom in a sentence like this)

There are three types of prepositions, including time prepositions, place prepositions, and direction prepositions. Time prepositions are those such as before, after, during, and until; place prepositions are those indicating position, such as around, between, and against; and direction prepositions are those indicative of direction, such as across, up, and down. Each type of preposition is important.

1.2.7.1   Prepositions of time

A preposition of time is a preposition that allows you to discuss a specific time period such as a date on the calendar, one of the days of the week, or the actual time something takes place. Prepositions of time are the same words as prepositions of place, however they are used in a

different way. You can easily distinguish these prepositions, as they always discuss times rather than places.

1. At – This preposition of time is used to discuss clock times, holidays and festivals, and other very specific time frames including exceptions, such as "at night."

2. In – This preposition of time is used to discuss months, seasons, years, centuries, general times of day, and longer periods of time such as "in the past."

3. On – This preposition of time is used to discuss certain days of the week or portions of days of the week, specific dates, and special days such as "on New Year's Day."

➢ My birthday falls *in* January.

➢ Birds often migrate *in* spring and autumn.

➢ My great-grandmother was born *in* 1906.

➢ Breakfast is a meal which is generally eaten *in* the morning.

➢ My parents grew up *in* the 1960s.

➢ My vacation ends *on* Monday.

1.2.7.2   Prepositions for Extended Time

To express extended time, English uses the following prepositions: *since, for, by, from—to, from-until, during,(with) in*

➢ She has been gone since yesterday. (She left yesterday and has not returned.)

➢ I'm going to Paris for two weeks. (I will spend two weeks there.)

➢ The movie showed from August to October. (Beginning in August and ending in October.)

> ➢ The decorations were up from spring until fall. (Beginning in spring and ending in fall.)
>
> ➢ I watch TV during the evening. (For some period of time in the evening.)
>
> ➢ We must finish the project within a year. (No longer than a year.)

1.2.7.3   Preposition of place

A preposition of place is a preposition which is used to refer to a place where something or someone is located. There are only three prepositions of place, however they can be used to discuss an almost endless number of places.

- At – A preposition of place which is used to discuss a certain point
- In – A preposition of place which is used to discuss an enclosed space
- On – A preposition of time which is used to discuss a surface

Prepositions of place allow you to be very specific when talking about where action takes place in stories or when discussing important details for communication purposes.

1.2.7.4   Prepositions for relative position

Higher than a point

To express notions of an object being higher than a point, English uses the following prepositions: over, above.

> ➢ He threw the ball over the roof.
>
> ➢ Hang that picture above the couch.

Lower than a point

To express notions of an object being lower than a point, English uses the following prepositions: under, underneath, beneath, below.

> ➤ The rabbit burrowed under the ground.

> ➤ The child hid underneath the blanket.

> ➤ We relaxed in the shade beneath the branches.

> ➤ The valley is below sea-level.

Close to a point

To express notions of an object being close to a point, English uses the following prepositions: near, by, next to, between, among, opposite.

She lives near the school.

> ➤ There is an ice cream shop by the store.

> ➤ An oak tree grows next to my house

> ➤ The house is between Elm Street and Maple Street.

> ➤ I found my pen lying among the books.

> ➤ The bathroom is opposite that room.

1.2.8 Conjunction

Conjunctions join words, phrases, or clauses, and they indicate the relation between the elements they join. Conjunctions are divided into three categories:

1. Coordinating conjunctions include *but, or, yet, so, for, and* , and *nor*. You might want to remember them by using the mnemonic word *boysfan*.

2. Correlative conjunctions cannot stand alone; they must have a "relative" nearby, usually in the same sentence. The pairs include *both/and, either/or, neither/nor, not only/also,* and *not only/but also*. Like coordinating conjunctions, they connect grammatically equal elements.

either . . . or whether . . . or

neither . . . nor both . . . and

not only . . . but also

When using correlative conjunctions, ensure verbs agree so your sentences make sense. For example: Every night, either loud music or fighting neighbors wake John from his sleep.

When you use a correlative conjunction, you must be sure that pronouns agree. For example: Neither Debra nor Sally expressed her annoyance when the cat broke the antique lamp.

When using correlative conjunctions, be sure to keep parallel structure intact. Equal grammatical units need to be incorporated into the entire sentence. For example: Not only did Mary grill burgers for Michael, but she also fixed a steak for her dog, Vinny.

3. Subordinating conjunctions are used in the beginning of dependent clauses (words that have a subject and verb but which cannot stand alone as sentences). You may remember that dependent clauses are sometimes called subordinate clauses. The most common ones are the following:

after	How	than
although	if	that
as if	in order that	though
as in	in that	unless
as long as	inasmuch as	until
as much as	now that	when
as soon as	once	whenever
assuming that	providing that	where

because	since	wherever
before	so long as	whether
even though	so that	while

There is only one rule to remember about using subordinate conjunctions:

A subordinate conjunction performs two functions within a sentence. First, it illustrates the importance of the independent clause. Second, it provides a transition between two ideas in the same sentence. The transition always indicates a place, time, or cause and effect relationship. For example: We looked in the metal canister, where Ginger often hides her candy.

1.2.9 Interjections

An interjection is a word used to express surprise or emotion (Oh! Hey! Wow!). It can be used as filler. Interjections often stand alone. If one is part of a sentence, it doesn't have a grammatical relation to the other words in the sentence; if it's taken out, the meaning of the sentence will be unchanged. Take a look at these sentences:

➢ Hey, what's going on?

➢ Well, I don't know what to say.

➢ Ouch! Did you step on my toe?

➢ Hey, well, and ouch are interjections.

When you're expressing a strong emotion or surprise (as in Stop! or Darn it all!), use an exclamation point. If you're using milder emotion or merely using a filler (as in like or well), use a

comma.

A note of caution about interjections: Use them in moderation, if at all. In dialogue, interjections are used far more often than in more formal writing (where they are hardly ever used).

1.3   Basic Sentence Structure

It is probably impossible to define a sentence to everyone's satisfaction. On the simplest level it may be described as a word or group of words standing by itself, that is, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period, question mark, or exclamation point. (In speech the separateness of a sentence is marked by intonation and pauses.) And yet an effective sentence involves more than starting with a capital and stopping with a period. The word or words must make sense, expressing an idea or perception or feeling clear enough to stand alone. For example, consider these two sentences:

> ➤   The package arrived. Finally.

The first consists of a subject and verb. The second is only a single word, an adverb detached from a verb (arrived). The idea might have been expressed in one sentence:

> ➤   The package finally arrived.
>
> ➤   The package arrived, finally.
>
> ➤   Finally, the package arrived.

But we can imagine a situation in which a speaker or writer, wanting to stress exasperation, feels that *finally* should be a sentence by itself.

As that example indicates, there are sentences which contain subjects and verbs and sentences which do not. The first kind *{The package arrived)* is "grammatically complete" and is the conventional form sentences take in composition. The second type of sentence *{Finally* in our

example) does not contain a subject and verb and is called a *fragment.* Fragments are more

common in speech than in writing, but even in formal composition they have their place. We will

use the definition that every sentence must have the following: (1) a predicate (usually called a

verb but is often made up of verbs, object, complements and modifiers) and (2) the subject of

that verb, and (3) the words must contain a complete thought.

In this Section, we'll consider what makes a sentence complete and how to identify its elements:

subjects, direct objects, prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, and all the rest. After a look

at different types and functions of sentences, we'll tackle the most troublesome aspect for many

writers: getting the subject and verb to agree.

Another way of defining the sentence is to say that the grammatically complete sentence is

independent, contains a subject and a predicate, and is properly constructed. Grammatical

independence simply means that the words constituting the sentence are not acting as a noun

or modifier or verb in connection with any other word or words. For example, *Harry was late* is

independent. *Became Harry was late* is not. *Because* turns the words into an adverb (more

exactly, an adverbial clause). The construction should modify another verb or clause as in *The*

men were delayed in starting because Harry was late. To take one more case. *They failed to*

agree is a grammatical sentence*. That they failed to agree* is not. It is a noun clause

and could function as the subject of a verb:

> ➢ *That they failed to agree* was unfortunate.

Or as the object of one:

> ➢ We know *that they failed to agree*.

Most English sentences flow from subject to verb to any objects or complements. The part of

the sentence containing the verb plus its objects, complements, and modifiers is called the

predicate.

1.3.1 Subject and Predicate

The subject of a sentence names who or what the sentence is about (Hence, the expression, "The subject of the sentence.") or simply a person, place or thing. The predicate of a sentence expresses something about the subject; for example the predicate tells what the subject does or is, where it is, or what is done to it. In a broader sense, the subject includes the subject word(s) plus all modifiers, and the predicate includes the verb together with its objects and modifiers. For instance, in *The man who lives next door decided last week to sell his house,* the narrow, or grammatical, subject is *man,* and the narrow, or grammatical, verb is *decided.* The broad, or notional, subject is *The man who lives next door,* and the broad, or notional, predicate is *decided last week to sell his house.*

Subject	Predicate
Economists	study the production and consumption of goods and services
The American economic system	rewards individual initiative
Control of production	is private
Consumers	have a variety of choices
Prices of goods and services	are largely determined by supply and demand

1.3.1.1   Writing the subject

The subject of a simple sentence can be a noun, a noun phrase, a pronoun, or a verbal noun (or verbals). A noun phrase is a group of words consisting of the main noun and the words that describe, limit or qualify it.

1.3.1.2   Omitting the Subject

A sentence that gives a command or makes a request often omits the subject, which is understood to be "you."

> ➢ [You] Keep off the grass.
>
> ➢ [You] Please don't litter.
>
> ➢ [You] Submit your application before June 1.

1.3.1.3   The complete subject and complete predicate

The complete subject is the person, place, or thing that the sentence is about, along with all the words that modify it (describe it or give more information about it). To find the complete subject, ask Who? or What?, insert the verb, and finish the question. The answer is the complete subject. E.g.

The devastating effects of famine can last for many years.

Who? What? Verb   Answer

Who or what | lasts for many years?| *The devastating effects of famine*.

Sometimes the subject does not appear first in the sentence, e.g.

> ➢ In our program, *student teachers* work full-time for ten months.

What or who works full-time for ten months? *Student teachers*. Notice that *In our program, student teachers* is not a sensible answer to the question.

The complete predicate (verb) is what the person, place, or thing is doing, or what condition the person, place, or thing is in.

> ➢ The devastating effects of famine *can last for many years*.

1.3.1.4   The simple subject

The simple subject is always a noun or a pronoun; the complete subject consists of the simple subject and any words or word groups modifying the simple subject. The simple subject is the fundamental part of the complete subject—the main noun(s) and pronoun(s) in the complete subject. To find the simple subject, strip away all modifiers in the complete subject. This includes single-word modifiers such as *the* and *devastating*, phrases such as *of famine*, and subordinate clauses such as that contain multiple subplots.

> ➢ The devastating *effects* of famine can last for many years.

The complete subject is "The devastating effects of famine"

The devastating – modifier

Of famine - modifier

A sentence may have a compound subject containing two or more simple subjects joined with a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, or or.

> ➢ Great *commitment* and a little *luck* make a successful actor.

Identifying complete and simple subjects is useful when recognizing problems surrounding such as: sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement, choice of pronouns such as I and me, missing subjects, and repeated subjects

1.3.1.5   The Simple Predicate

The simple predicate of a sentence is the fundamental part of the complete predicate—the verb(s) that are in the complete predicate. The predicate always includes a verb, which may be one word or a phrase. The verb in a grammatical sentence must be finite, that is, limited with reference to time or person or number. English has several nonfinite verb forms called participles and infinitives *{being,* for example, and *to be).* These can refer to any interval of time

and can be used with any person or with either number. But by convention these nonfinite forms cannot by themselves make a sentence. Thus *Harry was late* is a grammatical sentence, but *Harry being late* isn't because it contains only the participle *being* instead of a finite form such as *was.* In the example below, the simple predicate is *last.*

> ➢ The devastating effects of famine can *last* for many years.

Keep in mind that the subject of a sentence is never in a prepositional phrase. Also, if the sentence is a question, the subject sometimes appears after the verb. To find the subject, turn the question around so that it resembles a declarative sentence: E.g.

> ➢ What is Amy going to do with that leftover sandwich?

Now, turn the wording around so that you have:

> ➢ Amy is going to do what with that leftover sandwich?

Amy answers the *who?* or *what?* question about the verb *is going.*

1.3.2 Proper Construction

Even though a group of words is grammatically independent and contains a subject and a finite verb, it will not qualify as a grammatical sentence unless it is put together according to the rules. "Rules" here does not mean regulations arbitrarily laid down by experts. It means how we, all of us, use English. Thus *Harry late was* is not a good sentence. We simply do not arrange these words in that order. Here's one other example of a non-sentence resulting from

bad construction:

> ➢ #Harry was late, and although he was sorry.

And can only combine elements that are grammatically equal—two or more subjects of the same verb, for instance. In this case *and* joins two unequal constructions—the independent clause *Harry was late* and the dependent (adverbial) clause *although he was sorry.* We will

learn about these constructions. The construction can be turned into a legitimate grammatical sentence in either of two ways:

> ➤ Harry was late, although he was sorry.
>
> ➤ Harry was late, and he was sorry.

1.3.3 Object

The object is the noun that receives the action of a verb. A direct object is an object that is used with a transitive verb (see later). Direct objects are nouns (usually), pronouns (sometimes), or noun clauses (rarely). You can find the direct object by applying this formula:

1. First, find the subject of the sentence.

2. Second, find the transitive verb.

3. Third, say the subject and predicate, and then ask whom? or what? If a word answers either of those questions, it is a direct object.

All of this sounds more complicated than it is. Take a look at this sentence:

The little boy constantly dribbled the basketball in the outdoor playground.

You can find the subject (boy) and the verb (dribbled), so all you do is say boy dribbled whom or what? The word that answers that question (basketball) is the direct object.

1.3.4 Complements

Although some sentences are complete with only a subject and a predicate, many others need something else to complete their meaning. These additional parts of a sentence are called **complements.**

1.3.4.1 Subject Complement

A sentence may be made up of a subject but no objects as predicates. Instead the predicate provides more description of the subject. In this case a linking verb is used to connect the subject with its complement. Linking verbs, you'll remember, are all forms of be and, in certain situations, appear, become, feel, grow, look, remain, smell, sound, stay, and taste.) Subject complements complete (give you more information about) the subject. There are two types of subject complements: predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives.

If the subject complement renames the subject, it is a noun or noun equivalent (sometimes called a predicate noun/nominative).

> ➢ An e-mail requesting personal information *may be a scam*.

An e-mail requesting personal information = subject

May be = Verb

a scam = Subject Complement (predicate nominative)

If the subject complement describes the subject, it is an adjective or adjective equivalent (sometimes called a predicate adjective).

> ➢ Last month's temperatures were mild.

Temperatures = Subject

Were = Verb

mild = Subject complement (predicate adjective)

Whenever they appear as main verbs (rather than helping verbs), the forms of be — be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been — usually function as linking verbs. In the preceding examples, for instance, the main verbs are be and were.

Verbs such as appear, become, feel, grow, look, make, seem, smell, sound, and taste are linking when they are followed by a word group that renames or describes the subject.

> ➤ As it thickens, the sauce will look unappealing.

The sauce = subject

Will look = verb

Unappealing = subject complement

1.3.4.2 Transitive verbs and direct objects

A transitive verb is a verb that takes a direct object, a word or word group that names a receiver of the action.

> ➤ The hungry cat *clawed* the bag of dry food.

The simple direct object is always a noun or pronoun, in this case bag.

To find it, simply strip away all modifiers.

Transitive verbs usually appear in the active voice, with the subject doing the action and a direct object receiving the action.

1.3.4.3 Object Complements

Another kind of complement used with a transitive verb is an object complement (sometimes called an objective complement); it elaborates on or gives a fuller meaning to a direct object. Object complements can be nouns or adjectives. Take a look at this sentence:

> ➤ Karen asked her *friend* Paulette for a ride home.

In this sentence the direct object is Paulette (Karen asked whom or what? Paulette), and the noun friend is the object complement (it helps to complete the information about the word

Paulette). Object complements that act in this way—that is, they elaborate on the direct object—are nouns or pronouns.

Object complements can also be adjectives. Look at this sentence:

> ➢ On a whim, Matthew painted his fingernails *blue*.

The direct object is fingernails (Matthew painted whom or what? fingernails), and the adjective blue is the object complement (it elaborates on the word fingernails). Object complements that act in this way—that is, they describe the direct object—are adjectives.

1.3.4.4   Indirect Objects

The third type of complement used with a transitive verb is an indirect object. It comes before a direct object and answers the question to whom? or for whom? after the subject and verb. Here is a formula for finding an indirect object:

1. First, find the subject of the sentence.

2. Second, find the transitive verb.

3. Third, say the subject and the predicate, and then ask to whom? or for whom? If a word answers that question, it is an indirect object.

Look at this example:

> ➢ Kyle reluctantly gave Linda the keys to his new car.

In this sentence, the subject is Kyle and the verb is *gave*. Using the formula of asking to whom? or for whom? after the subject and verb, you would say Kyle gave to whom? The answer is Linda.

Note: with an indirect object, the word to or for is only implied. If one of those words is actually used, a prepositional phrase is formed, not an indirect object.

> Kyle reluctantly gave the keys to Linda.

(to Linda is a prepositional phrase, and Linda is not an indirect object)

Here's another example of indirect objects:

> You give her some yarn, and she will knit you a scarf.

You = subject

Give = transitive verb

Yarn = direct object

Her = indirect object

She = subject

Will knit = transitive verb

Scarf = direct object

You = indirect object

In more complex sentences, object complements follow the direct object. For example:

> People often consider chivalry a thing of the past.

People = subject

Often consider = verb

Chivalry = direct object

A thing of the past = object complement

Another example:

The kiln makes clay firm and strong

Subject = The kiln

Makes = verb

Clay = direct object

Firm and strong = object complement

When the object complement renames the direct object, it is a noun or pronoun (such as thing).

When it describes the direct object, it is an adjective (such as firm and strong).

1.3.4.5 Intransitive verbs

Intransitive verbs take no objects or complements.

> ➢ The audience laughed.
>
> ➢ The driver accelerated in the ramp.

Nothing receives the actions of laughing and accelerating in these sentences, so the verbs are intransitive. There is also no subject complement for either audience or driver. Notice that such verbs may or may not be followed by adverbial modifiers. In the second sentence, in the straightaway is an adverbial prepositional phrase modifying accelerated.

Action verbs can be divided into two categories: transitive and intransitive. The textbook definition of a transitive verb is "a verb that takes an object." What does that mean? If you can answer whom? or what? to the verb in a sentence, then the verb is transitive.

> ➢ I carried the injured boy to the waiting ambulance.

Carried whom or what? Since boy answers that question, the verb carried is transitive in that sentence.

> ➢ Exhausted after a hard day's work, I sank into the sofa with great delight.

Sank whom or what? Nothing in the sentence answers that, so the verb sank is intransitive in that sentence.

Knowing about transitive and intransitive verbs can help you with some easily confused verbs, such as lie and lay, and sit and set. You'll be able to see that lie is intransitive (I lie down), lay is transitive (I lay the book on the table), sit is intransitive (I'll sit here for a while), and set is transitive

For example:

> ➢ Mary Beth set the vase on the dresser

Set = transitive verb for the direct object vase

1.3.4.6 Using Prepositions with Objects

English uses the following prepositions to introduce objects of the following verbs.

At: glance, laugh, look, rejoice, smile, stare

> ➢ She glanced at her reflection.

(exception with mirror: She glanced in the mirror.)

> ➢ You didn't laugh at his joke.
>
> ➢ I'm looking at the computer monitor.
>
> ➢ We rejoiced at his safe rescue.
>
> ➢ That pretty girl smiled at you.
>
> ➢ Stop staring at me.

Of: approve, consist, smell

> ➢ I don't approve of his speech.
>
> ➢ My contribution to the article consists of many pages.

> ➤   He came home smelling of alcohol.

Of (or about): dream, think

> ➤   I dream of finishing college in four years.
>
> ➤   Can you think of a number between one and ten?
>
> ➤   I am thinking about this problem.

For: call, hope, look, wait, watch, wish

> ➤   Did someone call for a taxi?
>
> ➤   He hopes for a raise in salary next year.
>
> ➤   I'm looking for my keys.
>
> ➤   We'll wait for her here.
>
> ➤   You go buy the tickets and I'll watch for the train.
>
> ➤   If you wish for an "A" in this class, you must work hard.

1.4   The Building Blocks of Sentences

1.4.1 Phrases

A phrase is a functional word group that does not contain a subject-finite verb combination, although some phrases do use nonfinite verb forms. We can distinguish five kinds of phrases: verb (or verbals), prepositional, participial, gerundive, and infinitive.

A verb phrase is a main verb plus any auxiliaries:

> ➤ They have been calling all day.

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition *(in, of, to,* and so on) plus an object, plus (often though not invariably) modifiers of the object:

> ➢ Three people were sitting on the beautiful green lawn.

The chief function of prepositional phrases is to modify, either as adjectives or as adverbs. A participial phrase is constructed around a participle, usually in the present *(running,* for example) or past *(run)* participle form. It acts as an adjective:

> ➢ The man *running down the street* seemed suspicious.

Here the participial phrase modifies *man.* A gerundive phrase also uses the present participle but in a construction that functions as a noun. In the following example the gerundive phrase is the subject of the verb phrase *can be:*

> ➢ Running for political office can be very expensive.

An infinitive phrase, finally, is built around one of the infinitives (usually the active present—for example, to *run).* Infinitive phrases may act either as nouns or as modifiers. In this sentence the phrase is the direct object of the verb, a normal function:

> ➢ They want me to go to medical school.

Here it is an adjective modifying *time:*

> ➢ We had plenty of time to *get there and back.*

1.4.1.1   Prepositional Phrase

The most common type of phrase is the prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun (the object of the preposition). Here are a few examples:

during the terrible storm

after our dinner

for me

with his son

In a sentence, prepositional phrases act as adjectives (that is, they describe nouns or pronouns; they also answer the question which one? o r what kind of?) or adverbs (that is, they describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs; they also answer the question when? where? how? why? to what extent? or under what condition?).

When functioning as an adjective, a prepositional phrase nearly always appears immediately following the noun or pronoun it modifies.

> ➤ The hut had *walls of mud*.
>
> ➤ Several friends *from my job* are getting together tonight.

(*from my job* modifies or describes the noun *friends*)

Adverbial prepositional phrases usually modify the verb, but they can also modify adjectives or other adverbs. When a prepositional phrase modifies the verb, it can appear nearly anywhere in a sentence.

> ➤ James walked his dog on a leash.

They can also appear before the verb:

> ➤ Sabrina *will in time adjust* to life in Ecuador.
>
> ➤ *During a mudslide*, the terrain *can change* drastically.

Adverbial word groups usually answer one of these questions: When? Where? How? Why? Under what conditions? To what degree?

> ➤ James walked his dog *how*? *On a leash*.

> ➢ Sabrina will adjust to life in Ecuador *when*? *In time*.
>
> ➢ The terrain can change drastically *under what conditions*? *During a mudslide*.

1.4.1.2   Adjective or Adjectival Phrase

A word group that has an adjective as its head is called an **adjective phrase**. Note that the adjective in this phrase may be accompanied by other words such as determiners, modifiers etc. Adjective phrases can go before a noun (attributive position). They can also go after a linking verb like **be** (predicative position).

> ➢ He was wearing **a dark brown** suit. (Here the adjective phrase 'a dark brown' modifies the noun suit.)
>
> ➢ The fish tasted **awfully funny.** (Here the adjective phrase 'awfully funny' says something about the fish. It goes after the copular or linking verb **tasted.**

1.4.1.3   Adverb or Adverbial phrase

An adverbial phrase is a group of two or more words operating adverbially, meaning that their syntactic function is to modify a verb, an adjective, or an adverb. Adverbial phrases are phrases that do the work of an adverb in a sentence.

> ➢ I'll go to bed soon.
>
> ➢ I'll go to bed in an hour.
>
> ➢ I'll go to bed when I've finished my book.

The first example contains the adverb soon which describes when the person is going to be

The second example contains the adverbial phrase (which is also a prepositional phrase) that describes the same.

1.4.2 Clauses

A clause is a functional word group that does contain a subject and a finite verb. There are two basic clauses—independent and dependent. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. In fact, a simple sentence like *We saw you coming* is an independent clause. But usually the term is reserved for such a construction when it occurs as part of a larger sentence.

The sentence below, for instance, consists of two independent clauses:

> ➢ We saw you coming, and we were glad.

A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a grammatically complete sentence. It serves as part of a sentence—a subject, object, adjective, or adverb. If we were to place *when* before the opening clause in the example above, we would turn it into a dependent (adverbial) clause modifying the second clause (which remains independent):

> ➢ When we saw you coming we were glad.

Dependent clauses may also act as nouns, either as subjects (as in the first of the following sentences) or as objects (as in the second):

1.4.2.1   Independent Clauses

An **independent clause** (sometimes called a main clause) is a group of words that has a verb and its subject. These words could stand alone as a sentence; that is, the words could make sense if they were by themselves. Here is an example:

> ➢ The white index cards fell to the floor.

This is one independent clause. It has a subject *(cards)* and a verb *(fell)*, and it stands alone as a sentence. Now, look at this sentence:

> ➢ The cards scattered on the floor, and I had to pick them all up.

This is made up of two independent clauses. The first—*the cards scattered on the floor*—has a subject *(cards)* and a verb *(scattered)*; it could stand alone as a sentence. The second—*I had to pick them all up*—has a subject *(I)* and a verb *(had)*; it also could stand alone as a sentence. They are joined by a conjunction "and."

1.4.2.2   Subordinate Clauses

A **subordinate clause** (sometimes called a dependent clause) has a verb and its subject, and sometimes objects or complements, but it can't stand alone as a sentence. In order for a subordinate clause to make sense, it has to be attached to another part (to some independent clause) of the sentence. Look at this example:

> ➢ I had just alphabetized the cards when they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere.

In this sentence, *when they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere* is a subordinate clause. It has a subject *they* and verbs *fell* and *scattered.* But read the words alone:

> ➢ When they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere

The question is, what about them? What happened next? If the terminology seems complicated, think of the relationship this way: since a subordinate clause can't stand alone, it's secondary (subordinate) to the main clause of the sentence. Or, a subordinate clause relies (is dependent) on another clause (an independent clause) that's in the sentence.

Subordinate clauses are not independent because they usually function within the sentence as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns. So based on these functions, there are three types of subordinate clauses, and each acts in a different way in the sentence.

The following sections elaborate on prepositional, adjective or adverb, verbal, appositive, and absolute phrases.

1.4.2.3   Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses modify nouns or pronouns, usually answering the question Which one? It modifies or describes a noun or pronoun. And because they begin with a relative pronoun (*who, whom, whose, which,* or *that*) or occasionally with a relative adverb (usually *when, where,* or *why*), they are also called relative clauses.

> ➤   That man, whom I went to high school with, walked right by as if he'd never met me.

(Whom I went to high school with is an adjective clause describing the word *man.)*

> ➤   The coach chose players who would benefit from intense drills.

(*Benefit from intense drills* describes *players.* By itself, "benefit from intense drills" begs the question, who?)

In addition to introducing the clause, the relative pronoun points back to the noun that the clause modifies.

> ➤   A *book that goes unread* is a writer's worst nightmare.

Relative pronouns are sometimes "understood."

> ➤   The things [that] we cherish most are the things [that] we might lose.

(The relative pronoun *that* is deleted from the sentence)

The parts of an adjective clause are often arranged as in sentences

(subject / verb / object or complement).

> ➤   Sometimes it is our closest friends who disappoint us.

"who" is taken as the subject

(who disappoint us)

Frequently, however, the object or complement appears first.

> ➤ They can be the very friends whom we disappoint.

Whom is the object

1.4.2.4 Adverb Clauses

Adverb clauses modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, usually answering one of these questions: When? Where? Why? How? Under what conditions? To what degree? They always begin with a subordinating conjunction (such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *that*, *though*, *unless*, or *when*)

> ➤ When the sun went down, the hikers prepared their camp.

(*When the sun went down* describes the verb *prepared*)

> ➤ Kate would have made the team if she hadn't broken her ankle.

(*if she hadn't broken her ankle* describes the verb *made*)

> ➤ Mr. Sylvester came to visit because he needed some company for the evening.

(*Because he needed some company for the evening* is an adverb clause that modifies the verb *came.*)

Remember to use a comma after an introductory adverb clause, as in this example:

Whenever he came to visit, Mr. Sylvester always brought a box of candy for us.

1.4.2.5 Adjective and Adverb Prepositional Phrase

Both adjectival or adverbial phrases often contain with prepositions to form adjectival or adverbial prepositional phases. Adjective prepositional phrases follow the nouns they modify,

unlike adjectives which generally go immediately before the nouns they modify. Like adjectives, they tell *which one*, *what kind*, *how much*, or *how many*.

> ➤ The show **on television** tonight is about snow leopards **in Asia**.
>
> *On television* tells us which show. *In Asia* tells us which leopards.

Adverb prepositional phrases that modify adjectives and adverbs must go after the words they modify. Like intensifiers, they tell to what extent. They can also tell *why* or *in what way* or *in what circumstances*.

> ➤ I am hungry **because of this diet**. (*Because of this diet* tells why I'm hungry.)
>
> ➤ You can run pretty quickly **in those high heels**. (*In those high heels* tells when you run quickly.)

Adverb prepositional phrases that modify verbs can move about the sentence, just as adverbs do. Like adverbs they can tell *where*, *when*, *how*, and *to what extent*. Since they use more than one word, they can also tell *why*.

> ➤ We will go snowboarding **in the winter**. (*In the winter* tells when we will go snowboarding.)
>
> ➤ **In the winter**, we will go snowboarding.
>
> ➤ We will, **in the winter**, go snowboarding.

Hint:

Sometimes a prepositional phrase could make sense either as an adjective phrase modifying the noun before it or as an adverb phrase modifying the verb. In this case, it is usually considered an adjective phrase.

> ➤ The plant **in the window** gets lots of sunlight. (Tells which plant.)

> ➤ **In the window**, the plant gets lots of sunlight. (Tells where the plant gets lots of sunlight.)

> ➤ The plant gets lots of sunlight **in the window**. (Tells where the plant gets lots of sunlight.)

1.4.2.6 Verbal Phrases

A verbal phrase or a verbal is a word that is based on a verb (a verb form) but does not function as verbs. For example:

> ➤ *Traveling* might satisfy your desire for new experiences.

The word traveling is based on the verb "travel" but here functions as a noun would--a subject.

The verbal could be replaced by a noun:

> ➤ *The study abroad program* might satisfy your desire for new experiences.

There are three major kinds of verbals, each operating differently even though they are all based on verbs:

Participles – verb forms that function as adjective

Gerunds – usually a participle that functions as nouns

Infinitives – functions as noun, adjective or adverb

1.4.2.7 Participle

The word participle comes from the Latin word to mean "participate" or partake. The participle partakes in the sentence by modifying nouns or pronouns.

There are two types of participles: present participles and past participles. Present participles end in *–ing* as in crying, burning, etc. Past participles end in *-ed, -en, -d, -t, -n*, or *-ne* as in the words *asked, eaten, saved, dealt, seen,* and *gone.*

> The *crying* baby had a wet diaper.

> The *burning* log fell off the fire.

Past participles describe the noun in the past.

> *Shaken*, he walked away from the *wrecked* car.

> *Smiling*, she hugged the *panting* dog.

A participial phrase is a group of words consisting of a participle and the modifier(s) and/or (pro)noun(s) or noun phrase(s) that function as the direct object(s), indirect object(s), or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the participle, such as:

> *Removing his coat*, Jack rushed to the river.

The participial phrase functions as an adjective modifying Jack.

Removing (participle) his coat (direct object of action expressed in participle)

For example:

> Delores noticed her cousin *walking along the shoreline*.

The participial phrase functions as an adjective modifying cousin walking (participle) along the shoreline (prepositional phrase as adverb)

> Children *interested in music early* develop strong intellectual skills.

The participial phrase functions as an adjective modifying children interested (in) (participle) music (direct object of action expressed in participle) early (adverb)

> *Having been a gymnast*, Lynn knew the importance of exercise.

The participial phrase functions as an adjective modifying Lynn.

Having been (participle)

a gymnast (subject complement for Lynn, via state of being expressed in participle)

The above structure using "having been" is also called the perfect participle, which combines the participle having with a part participle describes the noun as having acted—having completed some action.

> *Having struck* a reef, the supertanker dumped over ten million gallons of oil into the ocean.

Their verbals are either present participles (such as *dreaming*, *asking*) or past participles (such as *stolen*, *reached*). Participial phrases frequently appear immediately following the noun or pronoun they modify.

> Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.

The phrase after "law" is the present participle or participial phrase of the sentence

This structure is often used in more complex sentences. Unlike other word groups that function as adjectives (prepositional phrases, infinitive phrases, adjective clauses), which must always follow the noun or pronoun they modify, participial phrases are often movable. They can precede the word they modify.

> *Being a weight-bearing joint*, the *knee* is among the most often injured.

They may also appear at some distance from the word they modify.

> Last night we saw a play that affected us deeply, written with profound insight into the lives of immigrants.

The phrase after the comma describes the play.

However, in order to prevent confusion, a participial phrase must be placed as close to the noun it modifies as possible, and the noun must be clearly stated.

> ➤ #Carrying a heavy pile of books, his foot caught on a step.

> ➤ Carrying a heavy pile of books, he caught his foot on a step.

In the first sentence there is no clear indication of who or what is performing the action expressed in the participle carrying. Certainly foot can't be logically understood to function in this way. This situation is an example of a [dangling modifier](#) error since the modifier (the participial phrase) is not modifying any specific noun in the sentence and is thus left "dangling." Since a person must be doing the carrying for the sentence to make sense, a noun or pronoun that refers to a person must be in the place immediately after the participial phrase, as in the second sentence.

1.4.2.8 Gerunds

The word gerund comes from Latin meaning something that functions as a noun. So a gerund is a verbal that ends in *-ing* and functions as a noun. The term *verbal* indicates that a gerund, like the other two kinds of verbals, is based on a verb and therefore expresses action or a state of being. However, since a gerund functions as a noun, it occupies some positions in a sentence that a noun ordinarily would, for example: subject, direct object, subject complement, and object of preposition.

Gerund phrases are built around present participles (verbals with *–ing*) and usually indistinguishable from present participles except for their role as nouns.

> ➤ Lizards usually enjoy *sunning themselves.*

Here, sunning themselves is a direct object, but is a gerund phrase made up of the present participle sunning.

> ➤ Singing the night away helped Joseph forget his troubles.

(*Singing* is a gerund; in this sentence, it acts as the subject. *Singing the night away* makes up a

gerund phrase.)

Here are more examples of gerunds functioning as nouns:

Gerund as subject:

> ➤ Traveling might satisfy your desire for new experiences. (Traveling is the gerund.)
>
> ➤ The study abroad program might satisfy your desire for new experiences. (The gerund has been removed.)

Gerund as direct object:

> ➤ They do not appreciate my singing. (The gerund is singing.)
>
> ➤ They do not appreciate my assistance. (The gerund has been removed)

Gerund as subject complement:

> ➤ My cat's favorite activity is sleeping. (The gerund is sleeping.)
>
> ➤ My cat's favorite food is salmon. (The gerund has been removed.)

Gerund as object of preposition: (prepositional phrases)

> ➤ The police arrested him for speeding. (The gerund is speeding.)
>
> ➤ The police arrested him for criminal activity. (The gerund has been removed.)

A gerund phrase is a group of words consisting of a gerund and the modifier(s) and/or (pro)noun(s) or noun phrase(s) that function as the direct object(s), indirect object(s), or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the gerund, such as:

The gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence.

> ➤ Finding a needle in a haystack would be easier than what we're trying to do.

Finding (gerund)

a needle (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

in a haystack (prepositional phrase as adverb)

The gerund phrase functions as the direct object of the verb appreciate.

> ➢ I hope that you appreciate my offering you this opportunity.

my (possessive pronoun adjective form, modifying the gerund)

offering (gerund)

you (indirect object of action expressed in gerund)

this opportunity (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

The gerund phrase functions as the subject complement.

> ➢ Tom's favorite tactic has been jabbering away to his constituents.

jabbering away to (gerund)

his constituents (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

The gerund phrase functions as the object of the preposition for.

> ➢ You might get in trouble for faking an illness to avoid work.

faking (gerund)

an illness (direct object of action expressed in gerund)

to avoid work (infinitive phrase as adverb)

The gerund phrase functions as the subject of the sentence.

> ➢ Being the boss made Jeff feel uneasy.

Being (gerund)

the boss (subject complement for Jeff, via state of being expressed in gerund)

1.4.2.9 Infinitive

An infinitive is a verbal consisting of the word to plus a verb (in its simplest "stem" form) and functioning as a noun, adjective, or adverb. The infinitive is called so because the opposite, the finite verb, is limited by the subject (person, gender), tense (present, past) and number. The infinitive is not limited by any of these and is in a sense, infinite.

> ➢ Phil agreed to give me a ride.
>
> ➢ Phil agrees to give me a ride
>
> ➢ Phil will agree to give me a ride
>
> ➢ They agree to give me a ride

"agree" is the finite verb. It is limited by various other elements.

"to give" is the infinitive. It doesn't change and can be used in any circumstance.

The verb "agree" is limited by tense and number, whereas "to give" as a direct object is not limited by either. To give works for past, present or future.

The infinitive may function as a subject, direct object, subject complement, adjective, or adverb in a sentence. Although an infinitive is easy to locate because of the *to* + verb form, deciding what function it has in a sentence can sometimes be confusing.

> ➢ *To wait* seemed foolish when decisive action was required. (subject)
>
> ➢ Everyone wanted *to go*. (direct object)
>
> ➢ His ambition is *to fly*. (subject complement)
>
> ➢ He lacked the strength *to resist*. (adjective)
>
> ➢ We must study *to learn*. (adverb)

Be sure not to confuse an infinitive—a verbal consisting of to plus a verb—with a prepositional phrase beginning with to, which consists of to plus a noun or pronoun and any modifiers.

- **Infinitives:** to fly, to draw, to become, to enter, to stand, to catch, to belong

- **Prepositional Phrases:** to him, to the committee, to my house, to the mountains, to us, to this address

An Infinitive Phrase is a group of words consisting of an infinitive and the modifier(s) and/or (pro)noun(s) or noun phrase(s) that function as the actor(s), direct object(s), indirect object(s), or complement(s) of the action or state expressed in the infinitive, such as:

➢ We intended to leave early.

The infinitive phrase functions as the direct object of the verb *intended*.

to leave (infinitive)

early (adverb)

➢ I have a paper to write before class.

The infinitive phrase functions as an adjective modifying *paper*.

to write (infinitive)

before class (prepositional phrase as adverb)

➢ Phil agreed to give me a ride.

The infinitive phrase functions as the direct object of the verb *agreed*.

to give (infinitive)

me (indirect object of action expressed in infinitive)

a ride (direct object of action expressed in infinitive)

➢ They asked me to bring some food.

The infinitive phrase functions as the direct object of the verb *asked*.

me (actor or "subject" of infinitive phrase)

to bring (infinitive)

some food (direct object of action expressed in infinitive)

> ➢ Everyone wanted Carol to be the captain of the team.

The infinitive phrase functions as the direct object of the verb *wanted*.

Carol (actor or "subject" of infinitive phrase)

to be (infinitive)

the captain (subject complement for Carol, via state of being expressed in infinitive)

of the team (prepositional phrase as adjective)

Actors: In these last two examples the actor of the infinitive phrase could be roughly characterized as the "subject" of the action or state expressed in the infinitive (me to bring). It is somewhat misleading to use the word *subject*, however, since an infinitive phrase is not a full clause with a subject and a finite verb. Also notice that when it is a pronoun, the actor appears in the objective case (*me*, not *I*, in the fourth example). Certain verbs, when they take an infinitive direct object, require an actor for the infinitive phrase; others can't have an actor. Still other verbs can go either way, as the examples below illustrate.

> ➢ Most students *plan* to study.

We don't say, "Most students plan them to study"

> ➢ We *began* to learn.

We don't say, "We began we to learn"

> ➢ They *offered* to pay.

> ➢ They *neglected* to pay.

> ➢ She *promised* to return.

Other verbs to accept "actors" for the infinitive phrase:

> ➢ He *reminded* me to buy milk.
>
> ➢ Their fathers *advise* them to study.
>
> ➢ She *forced* the defendant to admit the truth.
>
> ➢ You've *convinced* the director of the program to change her position.
>
> ➢ I *invite* you to consider the evidence.

Some verbs use either pattern:

Ask	expect	(would) like	want	need

Examples:

> ➢ I *asked* to see the records.
>
> ➢ I *asked* him to show me the records.
>
> ➢ Trent *expected* his group to win.
>
> ➢ Trent *expected* to win.
>
> ➢ Brenda *likes* to drive fast.
>
> ➢ Brenda *likes* her friend to drive fast.

1.4.2.10 Comparing Participles, Gerunds and Infinitives

Comparing Gerunds and Participles

Look at the following pair of sentences. In the first, the use of a gerund (functioning as a noun) allows the meaning to be expressed more precisely than in the second. In the first sentence the

interrupting itself, a specific behavior, is precisely indicated as the cause of the speaker's irritation. In the second the cause of the irritation is identified less precisely as Bill, who just happens to have been interrupting. (In the second sentence, interrupting is actually a participle, not a gerund, since it functions as an adjective modifying Bill.)

> ➢ I was irritated by Bill's constant interrupting.
>
> ➢ I was irritated by Bill, constantly interrupting.

The same pattern is shown in these other example pairs below: in the first of each pair, a gerund (noun-function) is used; in the second, a participle (adjective-function). Notice the subtle change in meaning between the two sentences in each pair.

Examples:

> ➢ The guitarist's finger-picking was extraordinary.

(The *technique* was extraordinary.)

> ➢ The guitarist, finger-picking, was extraordinary.

(The *person* was extraordinary, demonstrating the technique.)

> ➢ He was not impressed with their competing.

(The *competing* did not impress him.)

> ➢ He was not impressed with them competing.

(*They* did not impress him as they competed.)

> ➢ Grandpa enjoyed his grandchildren's running and laughing.
>
> ➢ Grandpa enjoyed his grandchildren, running and laughing.* (Ambiguous: who is running and laughing?)

Comparing Gerunds and Infinitives

The difference in the form of gerunds and infinitives is quite clear just from comparing the following lists:

- **Gerunds:** swimming, hoping, telling, eating, dreaming

- **Infinitives:** to swim, to hope, to tell, to eat, to dream

Their functions, however, overlap. Gerunds always function as nouns, but infinitives often also serve as nouns. Deciding which to use can be confusing in many situations, especially for people whose first language is not English.

Confusion between gerunds and infinitives occurs primarily in cases in which one or the other functions as the direct object in a sentence. In English some verbs take gerunds as verbal direct objects exclusively while other verbs take only infinitives and still others can take either. Many such verbs are listed below, organized according to which kind of verbal direct object they take.

Verbs that take only infinitives as verbal direct objects

Agree	Decide	Expect	hesitate
Learn	Need	Promise	neglect
Hope	Want	Plan	attempt
Propose	Intend	Pretend	

Examples:

➤ I hope *to go* on a vacation soon.

(**not:** I hope *going* on a vacation soon.*)

➤ He promised *to go* on a diet.

(**not:** He promised *going* on a diet. *)

> ➤ They agreed *to sign* the treaty.

(**not:** They agreed *signing* the treaty.*)

> ➤ Because she was nervous, she hesitated *to speak*.

(**not:** Because she was nervous, she hesitated *speaking*.*)

> ➤ They will attempt *to resuscitate* the victim

(**not:** They will attempt *resuscitating* the victim.*)

Verbs that take only gerunds as verbal direct objects

Deny	risk	Delay	consider
can't help	keep	give up	be fond of
Finish	quit	put off	practice
Postpone	tolerate	Suggest	stop (quit)
Regret	enjoy	keep (on)	dislike
Admit	avoid	Recall	mind
Miss	detest	Appreciate	recommend
get/be through	get/be tired of	get/be accustomed to	get/be used to

Examples:

> ➤ They always avoid *drinking* before driving.

(**not:** They always avoid *to drink* before driving.*)

> I recall *asking* her that question.

(**not:** I recall *to ask* her that question.*)

> She put off *buying* a new jacket.

(**not:** She put off *to buy* a new jacket.*)

> Mr. Allen enjoys *cooking*.

(**not:** Mr. Allen enjoys *to cook*.*)

> Charles keeps *calling* her.

(**not:** Charles keeps *to call* her.*)

Verbs that take gerunds or infinitives as verbal direct objects

Start	begin	continue	hate
Prefer	Like	Love	try
Remember			

Examples:

> She has continued *to work* at the store.
>
> She has continued *working* at the store.

> They like *to go* to the movies.
>
> They like *going* to the movies.

> Brent started *to walk* home.
>
> Brent started *walking* home.

Forget and remember

These two verbs change meaning depending on whether a gerund or infinitive is used as the object.

Examples:

➤ Jack forgets *to take* out the cat.

(He regularly forgets.)

➤ Jack forgets *taking* out the cat.

(He did it, but he doesn't remember now.)

➤ Jack forgot *to take* out the cat.

(He never did it.)

➤ Jack forgot *taking* out the cat.

(He did it, but he didn't remember sometime later.)

➤ Jack remembers *to take* out the cat.

(He regularly remembers.)

➤ Jack remembers *taking out* the cat.

(He did it, and he remembers now.)

➤ Jack remembered *to take* out the cat.

(He did it.)

➤ Jack remembered *taking* out the cat.

(He did it, and he remembered sometime later.)

In the second of each pair of example sentences above, the past progressive gerund form having taken can be used in place of taking to avoid any possible confusion.

Sense verbs that take an object plus a gerund or a simple verb

Certain sense verbs take an object followed by either a gerund or a simple verb (infinitive form minus the word to). With many of the verbs that follow the object, the use of the gerund indicates continuous action while the use of the simple verb indicates a one-time action. Still, sometimes the simple verb can indicate continuous action if one-time action wouldn't make sense in the context.

Feel	Hear	Notice	watch
See	Smell	Observe	

Examples:

➢ We watched him *playing* basketball. (continuous action)

   We watched him *play* basketball. (continuous action)

➢ I felt my heart *pumping* vigorously. (continuous action)

   I felt my heart *pump* vigorously. (continuous action)

➢ She saw them *jumping* on the bed. (continuous action)

   She saw them *jump* on the bed. (one-time action)

➢ Tom heard the victim *shouting* for help. (continuous action)

   Tom heard the victim *shout* for help. (one-time action)

➢ The detective noticed the suspect *biting* his nails. (continuous action)

   The detective noticed the suspect *bite* his nails. (one-time action)

> We could smell the pie *baking* in the kitchen. (continuous action)
>
> We could smell the pie *bake* in the kitchen. (continuous action)

Sometimes the simple-verb version might seem unconventional, so it's safer in most cases to use the gerund version.

1.4.2.11 Appositive

The appositive or the appositive phrase is set beside a noun or pronoun to describe instead of modifying them. It renames or explains them and is in the form of nouns or noun equivalents.

> Bloggers, *conversationalists at heart*, are the online equivalent of radio talk show hosts.
>
> Your friend *Bill* is in trouble. (friend is being renamed or explained)
>
> My brother's car, *a sporty red convertible with bucket seats*, is the envy of my friends.
>
> The chief surgeon, *an expert in organ-transplant procedures*, took her nephew on a hospital tour.

An appositive phrase usually follows the word it explains or identifies, but it may also precede it.

> A *bold innovator*, Wassily Kandinsky is known for his colorful abstract paintings.
>
> The first state to ratify the U. S. Constitution, Delaware is rich in history.
>
> A *beautiful collie*, Skip was my favorite dog.

1.4.2.12 Absolute Phrases

An absolute phrase is something more than a functional word group but less than a sentence. It is connected by idea but not through grammar to the rest of the statement in which it occurs:

> She flew down the stairs, her children tumbling after her.

This absolute tells us something about the circumstances attending the lady's rush downstairs, but it doesn't modify anything in the main clause, nor is it an object or a subject. It simply is not a grammatical part of that clause. (The term absolute derives from a Latin word meaning "free, unrestricted.") An absolute phrase modifies a whole clause or sentence, not just one word. It consists of a noun or noun equivalent usually followed by a participial phrase.

> *Her words reverberating in the hushed arena*, the senator urged the crowd to support her former opponent.

An absolute phrase combines a noun and a participle with any accompanying modifiers or objects. The pattern looks like this:

Noun + Participle + Optional Modifier(s) and/or Object(s)

Here are some examples:

> Legs quivering

Legs = noun; quivering = participle.

> Her arms folded across her chest

Arms = noun; folded = participle; her, across her chest = modifiers.

> Our fingers scraping the leftover frosting off the plates

Fingers = noun; scraping = participle; frosting = direct object; our, the, leftover, off the plates = modifiers.

Rather than modifying a specific word, an absolute phrase will describe the whole clause:

> Legs quivering, our old dog Gizmo dreamed of chasing squirrels.

> Her arms folded across her chest, Professor Hill warned the class about the penalties of plagiarism.

> ➢ We devoured Aunt Lenora's carrot cake, our fingers scraping the leftover frosting off the plates.

1.4.2.13 Noun Clause

A noun clause functions just like a single-word noun, usually as a subject, a subject complement, a direct object, an object of a preposition, predicate nominative, or appositive. It usually begins with one of the following words: *how*, *if*, *that*, *what*, *whatever*, *when*, *where*, *whether*, *which*, *who*, *whoever*, *whom*, *whomever*, *whose*, *why*.

> ➢ Rocky couldn't believe what he heard at the water fountain.

(*What he heard at the water fountain* is a noun clause serving as the direct object of *he heard*.)

> ➢ Copernicus argued that the sun is the center of the universe.

As with adjective clauses, the parts of a noun clause may appear in

normal order (subject / verb / object or complement) or out of normal order.

> ➢ Loyalty is what keeps *a friendship* strong.
>
> ➢ New Mexico is *where we live*.

1.5 Sentence Types

Sentences are classified in two ways: according to their structure (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) and according to their purpose (declarative, imperative, interrogative, and exclamatory). The classifications are based on the number of independent and dependent clauses a sentence contains. An independent clause forms a complete sentence on its own, while a dependent clause needs another clause to make a complete sentence. By learning these types, writers can add complexity and variation to their sentences and improve how they write. The combination of these types adds cogency and sophistication to the writing.

1.5.1 Simple Sentence

A simple sentence is one independent clause with no subordinate clauses.

> ➢ Eva could not visit her parents in Lima.

A simple sentence may contain compound elements — a compound subject, verb, or object, for example — but it does not contain more than one full sentence pattern. Another way of viewing the simple sentence is to see it as having one subject-verb connection or nexus. The following sentence is simple because its two verbs (*comes in* and *goes out*) share a subject (*Spring*).

> ➢ Spring comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.

There is still only one subject-verb connection

Spring → Comes and goes

1.5.2 Compound Sentence

A compound sentence is composed of two or more independent clauses with no subordinate clauses. Another way of viewing compound sentence is to view it as having at least two independent subject-verb connection or nexus. It can have more than two, even four or five, but usually stringing out a number is likely to create an awkward, rambling sentence. The independent clauses are usually joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) or with a semicolon.

> ➢ The car broke down, but a rescue van arrived within minutes.

Two independent clauses – *the car broke down*, and *a rescue van arrived within minutes*

Car → Broke down

Rescue van → Arrived

> ➢ A shark was spotted near shore; people left immediately.

> ➤ The clown frightened the little girl, and she ran off screaming.

> ➤ The Freedom Riders departed on May 4, 1961, and they were determined to travel through many southern states.

1.5.3 Complex Sentence

A complex sentence is composed of one independent clause with one or more subordinate clauses.

> ➤ After Mary added up all the sales, she discovered that the lemonade stand was 32 cents short.

("After Mary added up all the sale" is the adverbial subordinate clause for the verb discovered, which is in the independent class "she discovered that the lemonade stand was 32 cents short.")

> ➤ While all of his paintings are fascinating, Hieronymus Bosch's triptychs, full of mayhem and madness, are the real highlight of his art.

Notice that the sentence reads better than if it was written:

> ➤ All of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings are fascinating.

> ➤ His triptychs, full of mayhem and madness, are the real highlight of his art.

The complex sentence is created by joining the two independent clauses using the subordinating conjunction *while*.

1.5.4 Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause. The following sentence contains two independent clauses, each of which contains a subordinate clause.

> ➤ Tell the doctor how you feel, and she will decide whether you can go home.

Tell the doctor how you feel – First independent clause

she will decide whether you can go home – Second independent clause

How you feel – Noun subordinate clause

You can go home – Noun subordinate clause

This type of sentence is the most difficult to string together well.

> ➢ *Catch-22* is widely regarded as Joseph Heller's best novel, and because Heller served in World War II, which the novel satirizes, the zany but savage wit of the novel packs an extra punch.

1.6   Sentence Functions

Sentences function in four different ways; they can be declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory.

A **declarative sentence** makes a statement:

> ➢ I'll be seeing you tomorrow, and we can talk about our weekend plans.

An **interrogative sentence** asks a question:

> ➢ Do you think we can talk about our weekend plans tomorrow?

An **imperative sentence** issues a command, makes a request, or gives instructions

> ➢ Come here so we can talk about our plans.

Note that in imperative sentences the actual subject of the sentence is often an unstated, but understood *you:*

> ➢ (You) come here so we can talk about our plans.

4. An **exclamatory sentence** expresses strong emotion:

> ➢ How I hope we can be together this weekend!

1.7 Verb Tense

English verbs are divided into three main tenses, which relate to time: **present, past,** and **future.**

1.7.1 The Simple Tenses

The *simple present tense* tells an action that is usual or repeated, or actions occurring at the time they are being discussed.

> ➢ I hide from the Mafia.

The *simple past tense* tells an action that both began and ended in the past:

> ➢ I hid from the Mafia.

The *simple future tense* tells an upcoming action that will occur:

> ➢ I will hide from the Mafia.

1.7.2 The Imperfect Tenses

The *imperfect* is a verb form, found in various languages, which combines past tense (reference to a past time) and the action being non-habitual and incomplete. In English it is referred to as the *continuous* (e.g. present continuous tense) or *progressive* (e.g. present progressive) tenses, used interchangeably, although in other languages they may differ. They describe actions that are in progress whether in the present, past or future. A progressive verb consists of a form of *be* followed by a present participle (e.g. words ending with –ing, or –ed)

> ➢ I am walking (in the present)

> ➢ I was walking (in the past)

> ➢ I will be walking (in the future)

Note that this is different from:

> ➢ I walk everyday (Simple present tense)

Or

> ➢ He walks everyday (Simple present tense)

The imperfect tense provides more information than the simple tense. The present progressive (or present continuous) tense indicates that the noun is currently performing the act or performing the act at the time stated by the tense, whereas the simple tense does not provide that information. It merely indicates that the noun performs the act (perhaps habitually).

1.7.2.1   Present Progressive (Present Continuous)

The present progressive tense shows actions or conditions that are in progress now. Here are two examples:

> ➢ I am running today.
>
> ➢ The frogs are jumping.

Both of these include the present form of *to be*, am and are, then the -ing form of the verb follows those. These two sentences show that the actions are occurring in the present day and are in progress. Present progressive tense can help construct a timeline by showing one action occurring while another happens. This sentence has two examples of present progressive tense showing two actions in progress:

> ➢ The frogs are jumping while I am fishing in the pond.

Another way of describing the present progressive (present continuous) is to say the action that is in progress now or is going to happen in the future, taking the shape Is + [VERB+ing]

Examples:

> ➤ I am taking Spanish this semester.

> ➤ He is getting ready for the party.

> ➤ They are going to Florida.

1.7.2.2   Past Progressive (Past Continuous)

The second type of progressive is past progressive tense, which shows actions or conditions

that were in progress in the past but is no longer progressing. Look at these examples:

> ➤ I was running yesterday.

> ➤ The frogs were jumping.

Note the change in the to be form to the past versions, was and were. This tense shows the

action was in progress sometime in the past, but it is no longer happening.

1.7.2.3   Future progressive (Future Continuous)

The future progressive tense shows an action that's continuous and that will occur in the

future:

> ➤ I will be hiding from the Mafia tomorrow.

Future progressive verbs are always formed by using will be or shall be and adding –ing to the

verb.

1.7.3 The Perfect Tenses

The perfect tense in English shows action already completed (The word *perfect* literally means

"made complete" or "completely done.") and there are three kinds of perfect tenses depending

on which time one stands in relation to the act. They are formed by the appropriate tense of the verb to have plus the past participle of the verb.

1.7.3.1   Present Perfect

In present perfect the action is completed with respect to the present. In other words, the present perfect consists of a past participle (the third principal part) with "has" or "have." It designates action which began in the past but which continues into the present or the effect of which still continues.

> ➢ I have seen it.
>
> ➢ I have walked.
>
> ➢ The frogs have jumped.

Consider these two statements:

> ➢ 1. Betty taught for ten years. (Simple past tense)
>
> ➢ 2. Betty has taught for ten years. (Present perfect)

The implication in (1) is that Betty has retired. Instead in (2), with respect to the present she is still teaching.

> ➢ 1. John did his homework. He can go to the movies.
>
> ➢ 2. If John has done his homework, he can go to the movies.

A conjugation of Have + [VERB+ed] describes an action that began in the past and continues into the present or that occurred in the recent past.

Examples:

> ➢ The child has finished the candy.

> ➤ I have gone to college for one year.
>
> ➤ He has worked hard all day.

Infinitives (verbal to-verb functioning as noun, adjective or adverb), too, have perfect tense forms when combined with "have." For example:

> ➤ John hopes to win the trophy (infinitive phrase "to win the trophy" as a direct object to the verb hopes)
>
> ➤ John had hoped to have won the trophy

Here John in the past had hopes and he still feels that way in the present (the effect of the verb continuous to the present)

Sometimes problems arise when infinitives are used with verbs such as "hope," "plan," "expect," and "intend," all of which usually point to the future (I wanted to go to the movie. Janet meant to see the doctor.) The perfect tense sets up a sequence by marking the action which began and usually was completed before the action in the main verb.

> ➤ 1. I am happy to have participated in this campaign!
>
> ➤ 2. John had hoped to have won the trophy.

Thus the action of the main verb points back in time; the action of the perfect infinitive has been completed.

1.7.3.2   Past Perfect

The past perfect indicates past action that occurred and is completed prior to another past action or describes action that began and ended in the past using the had + (verb + ed) form. The action is completed with respect to the past.

> ➤ I had walked yesterday

- ➤ I had seen it.

- ➤ Mike had promised to repair Joe's bike.

- ➤ I had eaten dinner before he came.

- ➤ I had hidden from the Mafia for more than five years before I entered the Witness

  Protection Program.

Consider these examples:

- ➤ 1. John raised vegetables and later sold them. (Simple past tense)

- ➤ 2. John sold vegetables that he had raised. (past perfect)

The vegetables were raised before they were sold.

- ➤ 1. Renee washed the car when George arrived (simple past)

- ➤ 2. Renee had washed the car when George arrived. (past perfect)

In (1), she waited until George arrived and then washed the car. In (2), she had already finished washing the car by the time he arrived.

In sentences expressing condition and result, the past perfect tense is used in the part that states the condition.

- ➤ 1. If I had done my exercises, I would have passed the test.

- ➤ 2. I think George would have been elected if he hadn't sounded so pompous.

1.7.3.3 Future Perfect

Future perfect indicates future action that will have been completed at a specified time in the future, or to illustrate future action that will occur before some other action. So the action is completed with respect to the future.

> ➢ 1. Saturday I will finish my housework. (simple future)
>
> ➢ 2. By Saturday noon, I will have finished my housework. (future perfect)

1.7.3.4   Present Perfect Progressive (Continuous)

A popular tense that's used in a lot of academic writing is the present perfect progressive or continuous tense using the verb "has been" or "have been." This tense combines the present progressive (action in progress at the time) and the present perfect (began in the past and continuing in the present), that is the perfect and the imperfect to produce an action that began in the past and repeated over time, continuing in the present and may even continue into the future.

> ➢ For the past five years, I have been hiding from the Mafia.

Present perfect progressive verbs are always formed by using has been or have been and adding –ing to the verb.

1.7.3.5   Past Perfect Progressive (Continuous)

Another popular tense that's used in a lot of academic writing is the past perfect progressive or continuous tense using the verb "had been." This tense combines the past progressive (actions progressing in the past but no longer progressing) and the past perfect (occurred and completed in the past prior to another past action), to produce an action that was continuous in the past and completed before another past action.

> ➢ Before I entered the Witness Protection Program, I had been hiding from the Mafia for more than five years.

Past perfect progressive verbs are always formed by using *had been* and adding *–ing* to the verb.

1.7.3.6 Future Perfect Progressive

In the same way, future perfect progressive (continuous) tense illustrates a future continuous action that will be completed before some future time

> ➢ Next month I will have been hiding from the Mafia for more than five years.

Future perfect progressive verbs are always formed by using *will have been* and adding *–ing* to the verb.

1.7.4 Special Uses of the Present Tense

Use the present tense when expressing general truths, when writing about literature, and when quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing an author's views.

General truths or scientific principles should appear in the present tense unless such principles have been disproved.

> ➢ Galileo taught that the earth *revolves* around the sun (not revolved around the sun)

Because Galileo's teaching has not been discredited, the verb should be in the present tense. The following sentence, however, is acceptable:

> ➢ Ptolemy taught that the sun *revolved* around the earth.

When writing about a work of literature, you may be tempted to use the past tense. The convention, however, is to describe fictional events in the present tense.

> ➢ In Masuji Ibuse's Black Rain, a child reaches for a pomegranate in his mother's garden, and a moment later he was dead, killed by the blast of the atomic bomb. (not "a child reached")

When you are quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing the author of a nonliterary work, use present-tense verbs such as writes, reports, asserts, and so on to introduce the source. This

convention is usually followed even when the author is dead (unless a date or the context specifies the time of writing).

1.7.5 Subject-Verb Agreement

In the present tense, verbs need to agree with their subjects in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second, or third): *I sing*, *you sing*, *he sings*, *she sings*, *we sing*, *they sing.* Even if your ear recognizes the standard subject-verb combinations you will no doubt encounter tricky situations

1.7.5.1   Standard subject-verb combinations

The present-tense ending *-s* (or *-es*) is used on a verb if its subject is third-person singular (*he*, *she*, *it*, and singular nouns); otherwise the verb takes no ending. Consider, for example, the present-tense forms of the verbs *love* and *try*:

I love

We love

You love

He/She/It loves

I try

We try

You try

He/She/It tries

I/You (singular)/You(plural)/We/They have

He/She/It has

I/You (singular)/You(plural)/We/They do/don't

He/She/It does/doesn't

The verb *be* varies from this pattern; unlike any other verb, it has special forms in *both* the present and the past tense.

I am/was

You (singular/plural)/We/They are/were

He/She/It is/was

1.7.5.2 Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a word that comes between

Word groups often come between the subject and the verb. Such word groups, usually modifying the subject, may contain a noun that at first appears to be the subject. By mentally stripping away such modifiers, you can isolate the noun that is in fact the subject.

> ➢ The *samples* on the tray in the lab *need* testing.
>
> ➢ High levels of air pollution *cause* damage to the respiratory tract.

The subject is *levels*, not *pollution*. Strip away the phrase *of air pollution* to hear the correct verb: *levels cause.*

> ➢ The slaughter of pandas for their pelts *has* caused the panda population to decline drastically.

The subject is *slaughter*, not *pandas* or *pelts.*

NOTE: Phrases beginning with the prepositions *as well as, in addition to, accompanied by, together with*, and *along with* do not make a singular subject plural.

1.7.5.3 Treat most subjects joined with *and* as plural

A subject with two or more parts is said to be compound. If the parts are connected with *and*, the subject is nearly always plural.

> ➤ Leon and Jan often *jog* together.
>
> ➤ The Supreme Court's willingness to hear the case and its affirmation of the lower court's decision *have* set a new precedent.

EXCEPTIONS: When the parts of the subject form a single unit or when they refer to the same person or thing, treat the subject as singular.

> ➤ Fish and chips *was* a last-minute addition to the menu.
>
> ➤ Sue's friend and adviser *was* surprised by her decision.

When a compound subject is preceded by each or every, treat it as singular.

> ➤ Each tree, shrub, and vine *needs* to be sprayed.

This exception does not apply when a compound subject is followed by each:

> ➤ Alan and Marcia each *have* different ideas.

1.7.5.4 With subjects joined with or or nor (or with either . . . or or neither . . . nor), make the verb agree with the part of the subject nearer to the verb.

> ➤ A driver's license or credit card *is* required.
>
> ➤ If an infant or a child *is* having difficulty breathing, seek medical attention immediately.
>
> ➤ Neither the chief financial officer nor the marketing managers *were* able to convince the client to reconsider.

The verb must be matched with the part of the subject closer to it: child is in the first sentence, managers were in the second.

1.7.5.5 Treat most indefinite pronouns as singular

Indefinite pronouns are pronouns that do not refer to specific persons or things. The following commonly used indefinite pronouns are singular.

Anybody

Each

Everyone

Nobody

Somebody

Anyone

Either

Everything

No one

Someone

Anything

Everybody

Neither

Nothing

Something

Many of these words appear to have plural meanings, and they are often treated as plural in casual speech. In formal written English, however, they are nearly always treated as singular.

> ➢ Everyone on the team supports the coach.
>
> ➢ Each of the furrows has been seeded.
>
> ➢ Nobody who participated in the clinical trials was given a placebo.

The subjects of these sentences are Each and Nobody. These indefinite pronouns are third-person singular, so the verbs must be has and was.

A few indefinite pronouns (all, any, none, some) may be singular or plural depending on the noun or pronoun they refer to.

> ➢ SINGULAR Some of our luggage was lost.
>
> ➢ None of his advice makes sense.
>
> ➢ PLURAL Some of the rocks are slippery.
>
> ➢ None of the eggs were broken.

NOTE: When the meaning of none is emphatically "not one," none may be treated as singular: None [meaning "Not one"] of the eggs was broken. Using not one instead is sometimes clearer: Not one of the eggs was broken.

1.7.5.6 Treat collective nouns as singular unless the meaning is clearly plural.

Collective nouns such as jury, committee, audience, crowd, troop, family, and couple name a class or a group. In American English, collective nouns are nearly always treated as singular: They emphasize the group as a unit. Occasionally, when there is some reason to draw attention to the individual members of the group, a collective noun may be treated as plural.

> - SINGULAR The class respects the teacher.
>
> - PLURAL The class are debating among themselves.

To emphasize the notion of individuality in the second sentence, many writers would add a clearly plural noun.

> - PLURAL The class members are debating among themselves.
>
> - The board of trustees *meets* in Denver twice a year.
>
> - The board as a whole meets; there is no reason to draw attention to its individual members.
>
> - A young couple were arguing about politics while holding hands.

The meaning is clearly plural. Only separate individuals can argue and hold hands.

NOTE: The phrase *the number* is treated as singular, while *a number* is treated as plural.

> - SINGULAR The number of school-age children is declining.
>
> - PLURAL A number of children are attending the wedding.

NOTE: In general, when fractions or units of measurement are used with a singular noun, treat them as singular; when they are used with a plural noun, treat them as plural.

> - SINGULAR Three-fourths of the salad has been eaten.
>
> - Twenty inches of wallboard was covered with mud.
>
> - PLURAL One-fourth of the drivers were texting.
>
> - Two pounds of blueberries were used to make the pie.

1.7.5.7 Make the verb agree with its subject even when the subject follows the verb

Verbs ordinarily follow subjects. When the normal order is reversed, it is easy to be confused. Sentences beginning with *there is* or *there are* (or *there was*, *there were*) are inverted; the subject follows the verb. These sentences are also among the weakest in structure as there use linking verbs.

> ➤ There *are* surprisingly few *honeybees* left in southern China.

Honeybees is plural, hence "there are"

> ➤ There *were* a social worker and a neighbor at the scene of the crash.

The subject, *worker and neighbor*, is plural, so the verb must be *were*.

Occasionally you may invert a sentence for variety or effect. If you do, check to make sure that your subject and verb agree.

> ➤ Of particular concern *are* penicillin and tetracycline, antibiotics used to make animals more resistant to disease.

The subject, *penicillin and tetracycline*, is plural, so the verb must be *are*.

1.7.5.8 Make the verb agree with its subject, not with a subject complement

One basic sentence pattern in English consists of a subject, a linking verb, and a subject complement: *Jack is a lawyer.* Because the subject complement (*lawyer*) names or describes the subject (*Jack*), it is sometimes mistaken for the subject.

> ➤ A major force in today's economy *is* children — as consumers, decision makers, and trend spotters.

Force is the subject, not *children*. If the corrected version seems too awkward, make *children* the subject: *Children are a major force in today's economy — as consumers, decision makers, and trend spotters.*

> ➤ A tent and a sleeping bag *are* the required equipment for all campers.

Tent and bag is the subject, not *equipment*.

1.7.5.9 *Who*, *which*, and *that* take verbs that agree with their antecedents

Like most pronouns, the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, and *that* have antecedents, nouns or pronouns to which they refer. Relative pronouns used as subjects of subordinate clauses take verbs that agree with their antecedents.

> ➤ Take a *course that prepares* you for classroom management.

The antecedent course is singular

Constructions such as **one of the** *students who* [or *one of the things that*] may cause problems for writers. Do not assume that the antecedent must be *one*. Instead, consider the logic of the sentence.

> ➤ Our ability to use language is one of the things that *set* us apart from animals.

The antecedent of *that* is *things*, not *one*. Several things set us apart from animals.

When the word *only* comes before *one*, you are safe in assuming that *one* is the antecedent of the relative pronoun.

> ➤ Veronica was the only one of the first-year Spanish students who was fluent enough to apply for the exchange program.

The antecedent of *who* is *one*, not *students*. Only one student was fluent enough.

1.7.5.10 Words such as *athletics*, *economics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, *politics*, *statistics*, *measles*, and *news* are usually singular, despite their plural form

> ➤ Politics is among my mother's favorite pastimes.

EXCEPTION: Occasionally some of these words, especially *economics*, *mathematics*, *politics*, and *statistics*, have plural meanings:

> ➤ Office politics often sway decisions about hiring and promotion.
>
> ➤ The economics of the building plan are prohibitive.

1.7.5.11 Titles of works, company names, words mentioned as words, and gerund phrases are singular.

> ➤ *Lost Cities describes* the discoveries of fifty ancient civilizations.
>
> ➤ Delmonico Brothers *specializes* in organic produce and additive-free meats.
>
> ➤ *Controlled substances is* a euphemism for illegal drugs.

A gerund phrase consists of an *-ing* verb form followed by any objects, complements, or modifiers. Treat gerund phrases as singular.

> ➤ Encountering long hold times *makes* customers impatient with telephone tech support.

1.8 Voice

At the heart of every good sentence is a strong, precise verb; the converse is true as well--at the core of most confusing, awkward, or wordy sentences lies a weak verb. The voice of a sentence is determined by who receives the action. In a sentence written in the *active voice*, the subject of sentence performs the action and the object receives it. In a sentence written in the *passive voice* the subject receives the action. Since this is more complex structure for readers to

understand, writers should try to use the active voice whenever possible, even though in academic writing, writers are often encouraged to use the passive voice.

> ➤ Active: Scientists conduct experiments to test the hypothesis (scientists are subjects and experiments are objects)
>
> ➤ Passive: The experiments are conducted to test the hypothesis (experiments becomes the subject)

Active voice is used for most non-academic writing. Using active voice for the majority of your sentences makes your meaning clear for readers, and keeps the sentences from becoming too complicated or wordy. Even in academic writing, too much use of passive voice can cloud the meaning of your sentences.

Instead of writing:

> ➤ The entrance exam was failed by over one-third of the applicants to the school.

It is better to write:

> ➤ One-third of the applicants to the school failed the entrance exam.

Sentences in active voice are also more concise (and shorter in length) than those in passive voice because fewer words are required to express action in active voice than in passive. Passive voice requires more "weak" words. It uses abstract words like *is /am /are /was /were /being /been/has/have/had*, the definite article *(the)*, and prepositions like *by* and *of*. These are dull and colorless compared to concrete nouns, powerful verbs, and vivid adjectives. Good writers avoid these empty weak words and replace them with strong active verbs. Also, passive voice often traps writers. To make clear who is doing what, writers using passive voice must either tag unwieldy phrases at the end of clauses, such as "by so-and-so," or they must leave out this phrase and let the sentence become unclear.

Remember, the heart of your sentence beats in its strong verbs, concrete nouns, and vivid description! Prepositions and articles can become dead weight. If you understand that, your writing will be more direct and powerful if fewer prepositions and articles clog your sentences. Using active voice consistently is one way to ensure that doesn't happen.

(3) The passive voice clause can be confusing or unclear, especially in long sentences.

> ➤ My car has been driven to Dallas.

(By whom? By the speaker? By a car-thief? By the teletubbies?)

> ➤ Sixteen thousand calories were consumed in one sitting.

(Who is doing this monstrous act of dietary vandalism?)

> ➤ Five FBI agents entered the room, and the terrorist was plastered against the wall.

(Does that mean the five FBI agents plastered the terrorist against the wall? Or does it mean when the five FBI agents entered the room, the terrorist had plastered *himself* against the wall? Or did someone *else* entirely plaster the terrorist against the wall before the FBI arrived? It is impossible to tell with passive voice structure in the last clause.)

However, the author frequently doesn't know who did the action either. The agent doing the action might truly be unknown.

> ➤ Passive: Action on the bill is being considered by the committee
>
> ➤ Active: The committee is considering action on the bill
>
> ➤ Passive: I am reminded of watching a movie or TV show by watching a framed, mobile world through a car's windshield
>
> ➤ Active: The framed mobile world reminds me of watching a movie or TV show through a car's windshield.

1.8.1 Why academic writing often uses the passive voice

Sometimes the use of passive voice can create awkward sentences, or over-use of linking verbs, as in the last example above. Also, overuse of passive voice throughout an essay can cause your prose to seem flat and uninteresting. In scientific writing, however, passive voice is more readily accepted since using it allows one to write without using personal pronouns or the names of particular researchers as the subjects of sentences (see the third example above). This practice helps to create the appearance of an objective, fact-based discourse because writers can present research and conclusions without attributing them to particular agents. Instead, the writing appears to convey information that is not limited or biased by individual perspectives or personal interests.

1.8.2 When to choose the passive voice

While active voice helps to create clear and direct sentences, sometimes writers find using an indirect expression is rhetorically effective in a given situation, so they choose passive voice.

Also, writers in the sciences conventionally use passive voice more often than writers in other discourses. Passive voice makes sense when the agent performing the action is obvious, unimportant, or unknown or when a writer wishes to postpone mentioning the agent until the last part of the sentence or to avoid mentioning the agent at all. The passive voice is effective in such circumstances because it highlights the action and what is acted upon rather than the agent performing the action.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
The dispatcher *is notifying* police that three prisoners have escaped.	Police *are being* notified that three prisoners have escaped. (Focus on notifying)

Surgeons successfully *performed* a new experimental liver-transplant operation yesterday.	A new experimental liver-transplant operation *was performed* successfully yesterday.
"Authorities *make* rules to be broken," he said defiantly.	"Rules *are made* to be broken," he said defiantly.

1.9 Mood

English verbs are divided into **moods**, which show the writer's attitude toward what he or she is saying. Almost all verbs are used in the **indicative mood**, which means that the verb's sentence states an actuality. Some examples:

> ➢ I'll be seeing you later on tonight.
>
> ➢ We'll go to the movies with our friends.
>
> ➢ You may wear whatever you want.

The **imperative mood** is used to make requests or give commands. For example:

> ➢ Please give me the phone.
>
> ➢ Give it to me—or else!

1.9.1 Subjunctive Mood

Here are several more examples of subjunctive mood in sentences

> ➢ Mary Alice moved that the minutes be [not **are**] accepted. (expresses a request)
>
> ➢ If I were [not **was**] a millionaire, I would buy you a car. (contrary to fact)
>
> ➢ It's important that everybody be [not **is**] at the meeting early. (wish or request)

1.9.1.1 Forms of the subjunctive

In the subjunctive mood, present-tense verbs ***do not*** change form to indicate the number and person of the subject. Instead, the subjunctive uses the base form of the verb (*be, drive, employ*) with all subjects and do not add –s or -ed.

> ➢ It is important that you *be* [not *are*] prepared for the interview.
>
> ➢ We asked that she *drive* [not *drives*] more slowly.
>
> ➢ Also, in the subjunctive mood, there is only one past-tense form of *be*: *were* [never *was*].
>
> ➢ If I *were* [not *was*] you, I'd try a new strategy.

1.9.1.2 Uses of the subjunctive

The subjunctive mood appears in only a few contexts

1. in contrary-to-fact clauses beginning with *if* or expressing a wish;

2. In *that* clauses following verbs such as *ask*, *insist*, *recommend*, *request*, and *suggest*;

3. and in certain set expressions.

1.9.1.3 In contrary-to-fact clauses beginning with *if*

When a subordinate clause beginning with *if* expresses a condition contrary to fact, use the subjunctive *were* in place of *was.*

> ➢ The astronomers would be able to see the moons of Jupiter tonight if the weather *were* clearer (not if the weather was clearer)

The verb in the subordinate clause expresses a condition that does not exist: The weather is not clear.

> If I *were* a member of Congress, I would vote for that bill (not If I was a member of congress)

The writer is not a member of Congress, so the verb in the *if* clause must be *were*.

Do not use the subjunctive mood in *if* clauses expressing conditions that exist or may exist.

> If Dana *wins* the contest, she will leave for Barcelona in June.

1.9.1.4   In contrary-to-fact clauses expressing a wish

In formal English, use the subjunctive *were* in clauses expressing a wish or desire. While use of the indicative is common in informal speech, it is not appropriate in academic writing.

> **INFORMAL** I wish that Dr. Vaughn *was* my professor.

> **FORMAL** I wish that Dr. Vaughn *were* my professor.

1.9.1.5   In *that* clauses following verbs such as *ask*, *insist*, *request*, and s*uggest*

Because requests have not yet become reality, they are expressed in the subjunctive mood.

> Professor Moore insists that her students *be* on time. (not that her students are on time)

> We recommend that Lambert *file* form 1050 soon. (not that Lambert files form 1050)

1.9.1.6   In certain set expressions

The subjunctive mood appears in certain expressions: *be that as it may*, *as it were*, *far be it from me*, and so on.

1.10 Irregular Verbs

Most English verbs form their past and past participle by adding *–d* or *–ed* to the base form of the verb (the form you'd find listed first in the dictionary). These are called **regular verbs**.

Unfortunately, a number of verb forms aren't formed in that way; these are called **irregular verbs**.

Here is a list of many of those troublesome verbs.

Base (Infinitive)	Simple Past	Past Participle
Arise	Arose	Arisen
be/was	Were	Been
Bear	Bore	borne/born
Become	Became	Become
Begin	Began	Begun
Bend	Bent	Bent
Bet	bet/betted	bet/betted
Bid	bade/bid	bidden/bid
Bind	Bound	Bound
Bite	Bit	bitten/bit
Blow	Blew	Blown
Break	Broke	Broken
Bring	Brought	Brought
Build	Built	Built
Burn	burned/burnt	burned/burnt
Burst	Burst	Burst
Buy	Bought	Bought
Catch	Caught	Caught
Choose	Chose	Chosen
Come	Came	Come
Creep	Crept	Crept
Cut	Cut	Cut
Deal	Dealt	Dealt
Dive	dived/dove	Dived
Do	Did	Done
Draw	Drew	Drawn
Dream	dreamed/dreamt	dreamed/dreamt
Drink	Drank	Drunk
Drive	Drove	Driven
Eat	Ate	Eaten
Eaten	Fell	Fallen

Feed	Fed	Fed
Feel	Felt	Felt
Find	Found	Found
Fit	fitted/fit	Fit
Fly	Flew	Flown
Freeze	Froze	Frozen
Get	Got	gotten/got
Give	Gave	Given
Go	Went	Gone
Grow	Grew	Grown
hang (to suspend)	Hung	Hung
Has	Had	Had
Have	Had	Had
Hear	Heard	Heard
Hide	Hid	hidden/hid
Hit	Hit	Hit
Hold	Held	Held
Keep	Kept	Kept
Know	Knew	Known
Lay	Laid	Laid
Lead	Led	Led
Leap	leaped/leapt	leaped/leapt
Learn	learned/learnt	learned/learnt
Leave	Left	Left
lie (to rest or recline)	lay	Lain
Light	lighted/lit	lighted/lit
Lose	lost	Lost
Make	made	Made
Mean	meant	Meant
Meet	met	Met
Mistake	mistook	Mistaken
Mow	mowed	mowed/mown
Pay	paid	Paid
Plead	pleaded/pled	pleaded/pled
Prove	proved/proven	proved/proven
Quit	quit/quitted	quit/quitted
Ride	Rode	Ridden
Ring	Rang	Rung

Rise	Rose	Risen
Run	Ran	Run
saw (to cut)	Sawed	sawed/sawn
Say	Said	Said
See	Saw	Seen
Sell	Sold	Sold
Send	Sent	Sent
Set	Set	Set
Sew	Sewed	sewn/sewed
Shake	Shook	Shaken
Shine	shone/shined	shone/shined
Show	Showed	shown/showed
Shrink	shrank/shrunk	shrunk/shrunken
Shut	Shut	Shut
Sing	sang/sung	Sung
Sink	sank/sunk	Sunk
Sit	Sat	Sat
Sleep	Slept	Slept
Slide	Slid	Slid
Sling	Slung	Slung
Smell	smelled/smelt	smelled/smelt
Speak	Spoke	Spoken
Speed	sped/speeded	sped/speeded
Spell	spelled/spelt	spelled/spelt
Spend	Spent	Spent
Spill	spilled/spilt	spilled/spilt
Spin	Spun	Spun
Spoil	spoiled/spoilt	spoiled/spoilt
Spring	sprang/sprung	Sprung
Steal	Stole	Stolen
Stick	Stuck	Stuck
Sting	Stung	Stung
Stink	stank/stunk	Stunk
Strike	Struck	struck/stricken
String	Strung	Strung
Swear	Swore	Sworn
Sweep	Swept	Swept
Swim	Swam	Swum
Swing	Swung	Swung

Take	Took	Taken
Teach	Taught	Taught
Tear	Tore	Torn
Tell	Told	Told
Think	Thought	Thought
Throw	Threw	Thrown
Wake	woke/waked	waked/woken
Wear	Wore	Worn
Weave	Wove	Woven
Weep	Wept	Wept
Wet	wet/wetted	wet/wetted
Win	Won	Won
Wind	Wound	Wound

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Section 2: Punctuation

In the examples for this Section, square brackets indicate punctuation that should be omitted. In the following examples, the commas after *rich* and *chocolate* should be omitted.

> ➢ Ira ordered a rich[,] chocolate[,] layer cake.

2.1 At the End of the Sentence

2.1.1 The Period

A **period** is most often used to signal the end of a declarative sentence (one that states a fact) or an imperative sentence (one that gives a command or states a request). For example:

> ➢ **Declarative sentence:** The majority of the viewers stopped watching the program after the format was changed.
>
> ➢ **Imperative sentence:** Hand me the pen that rolled near you.

A period is conventionally used in abbreviations of titles and Latin words or phrases, including the time designations for morning and afternoon.

> ➢ Mr.   i.e.   a.m. (or AM)
>
> ➢ Ms.   e.g.   p.m. (or PM)
>
> ➢ Dr. etc.

NOTE: If a sentence ends with a period marking an abbreviation, do not add a second period.

Do not use a period with US Postal Service abbreviations for states: MD, TX, CA.

Current usage is to omit the period in abbreviations of organization and country names, academic degrees, and designations for eras.

> ➢ NATO   UNESCO   UCLA   BS   BC

> ➤ IRS   AFL-CIO   NIH   PhD   BCE

2.1.2 Question Marks

A **question mark** goes at the end of a direct question or a sentence that ends in questions. (You knew that, didn't you?) It is also used to show that there is doubt or uncertainty about something written in the sentence, such as a name, a date, or a word. In birth and death dates, such as (?–1565), the question mark means that the birth date has not been verified.

If a polite request is written in the form of a question, it may be followed by a period.

> ➤ Would you please send me your catalog of lilies.

TIP: Do not use a question mark after an indirect question, one that is reported rather than asked directly. Use a period instead.

> ➤ He asked me who was teaching the mythology course this year[?]

NOTE: Questions in a series may be followed by question marks even when they are not complete sentences.

> ➤ We wondered where Calamity had hidden this time. Under the sink? Behind the furnace? On top of the bookcase?

Look at these examples:

> ➤ The police are searching for a fugitive known only as Richard-O (?) in connection with the crime. (uncertainty about the person's name)
>
> ➤ Paul said he would donate five thousand (?) dollars to the charity. (uncertainty about the exact amount of the donation)
>
> ➤ Be sure to include question marks that are parts of titles:
>
> ➤ I refuse to watch that new television program *Can You Believe It?*

If you have a series of questions that are not complete sentences, a question mark should be included after each fragment:

> ➢ Can you believe that it's ten below zero? or that it's snowing? or that my electricity has gone off? or that the telephone has gone out? or that I'm completely out of snacks to get me through this weather?

2.1.3 Exclamation Point

An **exclamation point** (exclamation mark) is used to express strong feelings. There's quite a difference between these two sentences:

> ➢ Out of the blue, Marsha called Kyle last night.
>
> ➢ Out of the blue, Marsha called Kyle last night!

The second sentence tells the reader that there was something extraordinary about the fact that Marsha called Kyle. In formal writing, don't use an exclamation point (unless, of course, you're quoting a source or citing a title with an exclamation point). In informal writing, you might include exclamation points after information that you find to be remarkable or information that you're excited about:

> ➢ Paul said that he would donate five thousand dollars (!) to the charity.
>
> or
>
> ➢ Paul said that he would donate five thousand dollars to the charity!

As with question marks, check to see if an exclamation point is part of a title. If it is, be sure to include it:

> ➢ I refuse to watch that new television program *I Can't Believe It!*

Choose when to use the exclamation mark.

> ➤ Whenever I see my favorite hitter, Derrek Lee, in the batter's box, I dream of making it to the big leagues[!]. My team would win every time!

The first exclamation point should be deleted so that the second one will have more force.

2.2 Comma

The comma was invented to help readers. Without it, sentence parts can collide into one another unexpectedly, causing misreading. The comma is a valuable, useful punctuation device because it separates the structural elements of sentences into manageable segments. The rules provided here are those found in traditional handbooks; however, in certain rhetorical contexts and for specific purposes, these rules may be broken.

> ➤ **CONFUSING** If you cook Elmer will do the dishes.
>
> ➤ **CONFUSING** While we were eating a rattlesnake approached our campsite.

Add commas in the logical places (after *cook* and *eating*), and suddenly all is clear. No longer is Elmer being cooked, the rattlesnake being eaten.

Various rules have evolved to prevent such misreadings and to speed readers along through complex grammatical structures. Those rules are detailed in this section.

2.2.1 Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses

When a coordinating conjunction connects two or more independent clauses — word groups that could stand alone as separate sentences — a comma must precede the conjunction. There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English: *and, but, or, nor, for, so,* and *yet.*

A comma tells readers that one independent clause has come to a close and that another is about to begin.

> ➢ The department sponsored a seminar on college survival skills, and it also hosted a barbecue for new students.
>
> ➢ The game was over, but the crowd refused to leave.
>
> ➢ The student explained her question, yet the instructor still didn't seem to understand.
>
> ➢ Yesterday was her brother's birthday, so she took him out to dinner.

EXCEPTION: If the two independent clauses are short and there is no danger of misreading, the comma may be omitted.

> ➢ The plane took off and we were on our way.

TIP: As a rule, do *not* use a comma to separate coordinate word groups that are not independent clauses.

> ➢ A good money manager controls expenses[,] and invests surplus dollars to meet future needs.

The word group following *and* is not an independent clause; it is the second half of a compound predicate (*controls . . . and invests*).

2.2.2 Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause

The most common introductory word groups are phrases and clauses functioning as adverbs. Such word groups usually tell when, where, how, why, or under what conditions the main action of the sentence occurred.

A comma tells readers that the introductory phrase or clause has come to a close and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin.

> ➢ Near a small stream at the bottom of the canyon, the park rangers discovered an abandoned mine.
>
> ➢ Having finished the test, he left the room.
>
> ➢ To get a seat, you'd better come early.
>
> ➢ After the test but before lunch, I went jogging.

"Near a small stream at the bottom of the canyon" is the introductory phrase, the adverbial phrase for "discovered" (discovered where?).

The comma tells readers that the introductory prepositional phrase has come to a close.

> ➢ When Irwin was ready to iron, his cat tripped on the extension cord.

Without the comma, readers may have Irwin ironing his cat. The comma signals that *his cat* is the subject of a new clause, not part of the introductory one.

EXCEPTION: The comma may be omitted after a short adverb clause or phrase if there is no danger of misreading.

> ➢ In no time we were at 2,800 feet.

Sentences also frequently begin with participial phrases describing the noun or pronoun immediately following them. The comma tells readers that they are about to learn the identity of the person or thing described; therefore, the comma is usually required even when the phrase is short.

> ➢ Thinking his motorcade drive through Dallas was routine, President Kennedy smiled and waved at the crowds.

"Thinking his motorcade drive through Dallas was routine" is the participial phrase (adjectival phrase starting with a participle –ing) that describes President Kennedy.

> ➤ Buried under layers of younger rocks, the earth's oldest rocks contain no fossils.

Buried is the past participle.

NOTE: Other introductory word groups include transitional expressions and absolute phrases

2.2.3 Use a comma between all items in a series

When three or more items are presented in a series, those items should be separated from one another with commas. Items in a series may be single words, phrases, or clauses.

> ➤ Bubbles of air, leaves, ferns, bits of wood, and insects are often found trapped in amber.
>
> ➤ Langston Hughes's poetry is concerned with racial pride, social justice, and the diversity of the African American experience.

Although some writers view the comma between the last two items as optional, most experts advise using the comma because its omission can result in ambiguity or misreading.

> ➤ David willed his oldest niece all of his property, houses, and warehouses.

Did Uncle David will his property *and* houses *and* warehouses — or simply his property, consisting of houses and warehouses? If the former meaning is intended, a comma is necessary to prevent ambiguity.

> ➤ The activities include touring the White House, visiting the Air and Space Museum, attending a lecture about the Founding Fathers, and kayaking on the Potomac River.

Without the comma, the activities might seem to include a lecture about kayaking, not participating in kayaking. The comma makes it clear that *kayaking on the Potomac River* is a separate item in the series.

2.2.4 Use a comma between coordinate adjectives not joined with and. Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives

When two or more adjectives each modify a noun separately, they are coordinate.

> ➢ Roberto is a *warm*, *gentle*, *affectionate* father.
>
> ➢ He was a *difficult, stubborn* child.

TEST: If the adjectives can be joined with *and*, the adjectives are coordinate, so you should use commas: *warm* and *gentle* and *affectionate* (*warm*, *gentle*, *affectionate*).

Adjectives that do not modify the noun separately are cumulative.

> ➢ *Three large gray* shapes moved slowly toward us.
>
> ➢ She often wore a *gray wool* shawl.

Beginning with the adjective closest to the noun *shapes*, these modifiers lean on one another, piggyback style, with each modifying a larger word group. *Gray* modifies *shapes*, *large* modifies *gray shapes*, and *three* modifies *large gray shapes*. Cumulative adjectives cannot be joined with *and* (not *three* and *large* and *gray shapes*).

This is an example of coordinate adjectives

> ➢ Should patients with severe, irreversible brain damage be put on life support systems?

This is an example of cumulative adjectives

> ➢ Ira ordered a rich[,] chocolate[,] layer cake.

2.2.5 Use commas to set off nonrestrictive elements. Do not use commas to set off restrictive elements.

Certain word groups that modify nouns or pronouns can be restrictive or nonrestrictive — that is, essential or not essential to the meaning of a sentence. These word groups are usually adjective clauses, adjective phrases, or appositives.

2.2.5.1   Restrictive elements

A restrictive element defines or limits the meaning of the word it modifies; it is therefore essential to the meaning of the sentence and is not set off with commas. If you remove a restrictive modifier from a sentence, the meaning changes significantly, becoming more general than you intended.

> ➢ The campers need clothes *that are durable.*
>
> ➢ Scientists *who study the earth's structure* are called geologists.

The first sentence does not mean that the campers need clothes in general.

The intended meaning is more limited: The campers need durable clothes. The second sentence does not mean that scientists in general are called geologists; only those scientists who specifically study the earth's structure are called geologists. The italicized word groups are essential and are therefore not set off with commas.

2.2.5.2   Nonrestrictive elements

A nonrestrictive modifier describes a noun or pronoun whose meaning has already been clearly defined or limited. Because the modifier contains nonessential or parenthetical information, it is set off with commas. If you remove a nonrestrictive element from a sentence, the meaning does not change dramatically. Some meaning may be lost, but the defining characteristics of the person or thing described remain the same.

> ➤ The campers need sturdy shoes, *which are expensive.*

> ➤ The scientists, who represented eight different universities, met to review applications for the prestigious O'Hara Award.

In the first sentence, the campers need sturdy shoes, and the shoes happen to be expensive. In the second sentence, the scientists met to review applications for the O'Hara Award; that they represented eight different universities is informative but not critical to the meaning of the sentence. The nonessential information in both sentences is set off with commas.

NOTE: Often it is difficult to tell whether a word group is restrictive or nonrestrictive without seeing it in context and considering the writer's meaning. Both of the following sentences are grammatically correct, but their meaning is slightly different.

> ➤ The dessert made with fresh raspberries was delicious.

> ➤ The dessert, made with fresh raspberries, was delicious.

In the first example, the phrase *made with fresh raspberries* tells readers which of two or more desserts the writer is referring to. In the example with commas, the phrase merely adds information about the dessert.

2.2.5.3   Adjective clauses

Adjective clauses are patterned like sentences, containing subjects and verbs, but they function within sentences as modifiers of nouns or pronouns. They always follow the word they modify, usually immediately. Adjective clauses begin with a relative pronoun (*who, whom, whose, which, that*) or with a relative adverb (*where, when*).

Nonrestrictive adjective clauses are set off with commas; restrictive adjective clauses are not.

> ➤ Ed's house*, which is located on thirteen acres,* was completely furnished with bats in the rafters and mice in the kitchen.

The adjective clause *which is located on thirteen acres* does not restrict the meaning of *Ed's house*; the information is nonessential and is therefore enclosed in commas.

> ➢ The giant panda that was born at the San Diego Zoo in 2003 was sent to China in 2007.

Because the adjective clause *that was born at the San Diego Zoo in 2003* identifies one particular panda out of many, the information is essential and is therefore not enclosed in commas.

NOTE: Use *that* only with restrictive (essential) clauses. Many writers prefer to use *which* only with nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses, but usage varies.

2.2.5.4 Adjective phrases

Prepositional or verbal phrases functioning as adjectives may be restrictive or nonrestrictive. Nonrestrictive phrases are set off with commas; restrictive phrases are not.

> ➢ The helicopter, with its million-candlepower spotlight illuminating the area, circled above.

The *with* phrase is nonessential because its purpose is not to specify which of two or more helicopters is being discussed.

> ➢ One corner of the attic was filled with newspapers[,] *dating from the early 1900s.*

Dating from the early 1900s restricts the meaning of *newspapers*, so the comma should be omitted.

> ➢ The bill[,] proposed by the Illinois representative[,] would lower taxes and provide services for middle-income families.

Proposed by the Illinois representative identifies exactly which bill is meant.

2.2.5.5 Appositives

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames a nearby noun. Nonrestrictive appositives are set off with commas; restrictive appositives are not.

> ➢ Darwin's most important book, *On the Origin of Species,* was the result of many years of research.

Most important restricts the meaning to one book, so the appositive *On the Origin of Species* is nonrestrictive and should be set off with commas.

The song[,] "Viva la Vida[,] " was blasted out of huge amplifiers at the concert.

Once they've read *song*, readers still don't know precisely which song the writer means. The appositive following *song* restricts its meaning, so the appositive should not be enclosed in commas.

2.2.6 Use commas to set off transitional and parenthetical expressions, absolute phrases, and word groups expressing contrast

2.2.6.1 Transitional expressions

Transitional expressions serve as bridges between sentences or parts of sentences. They include conjunctive adverbs such as *however*, *therefore*, and *moreover* and transitional phrases such as *for example*, *as a matter of fact*, and *in other words*. The following are transitional phrases

after all

even so

in fact

as a matter of fact

for example

in other words

as a result

for instance

in the first place

at any rate

in addition

on the contrary

at the same time

in conclusion

on the other hand

When a transitional expression appears between independent clauses in a compound sentence, it is preceded by a semicolon and is usually followed by a comma.

> ➢ Minh did not understand our language; moreover, he was unfamiliar with our customs.

When a transitional expression appears at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle of an independent clause, it is usually set off with commas.

> ➢ As a matter of fact, American football was established by fans who wanted to play a more organized game of rugby.

> ➢ Natural foods are not always salt free; celery, for example, contains more sodium than most people would imagine.

EXCEPTION: If a transitional expression blends smoothly with the rest of the sentence, calling for little or no pause in reading, it does not need to be set off with a comma. Expressions such as *also*, *at least*, *certainly*, *consequently*, *indeed*, *of course*, *moreover*, *no doubt*, *perhaps*, *then*, and *therefore* do not always call for a pause.

> ➢ Alice's bicycle is broken; *therefore* you will need to borrow Sue's.

2.2.6.2   Parenthetical expressions

Expressions that are distinctly parenthetical, providing only supplemental information, should be set off with commas.

> ➢ Evolution*, as far as we know, doesn't work this way.
>
> ➢ The bass weighed about twelve pounds, give or take a few ounces.

2.2.6.3   Absolute phrases

An absolute phrase, which modifies the whole sentence, usually consists of a noun followed by a participle or participial phrase. Absolute phrases may appear at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. Wherever they appear, they should be set off with commas.

The sun appearing for the first time in a week, we were at last able to begin the archaeological dig.

The participle appearing is part of the absolute phrase *The sun appearing for the first time in a week*

> ➢ Elvis Presley made music industry history in the 1950s, *his records having sold more than ten million copies.*

Having is the participle, part of the absolute phrase, *his records having sold more than ten million copies*

NOTE: Do not insert a comma between the noun and the participle in an absolute construction.

> ➢ The next contestant[,] being five years old, the emcee adjusted the height of the microphone.

2.2.6.4 Word groups expressing contrast

Sharp contrasts beginning with words such as *not, never,* and *unlike* are set off with commas.

> ➢ The Epicurean philosophers sought mental, not bodily, pleasures.
>
> ➢ Unlike Robert, Celia loved dance contests.

2.2.7 Use commas to set off words and phrases according to convention.

2.2.7.1 Direct address

> ➢ Forgive me, Angela, for forgetting your birthday.

2.2.7.2 Yes and no

> ➢ Yes, the loan will probably be approved.

2.2.7.3 Interrogative tags, mild interjections

> ➢ The film was faithful to the book, wasn't it?
>
> ➢ Well, cases like these are difficult to decide.

2.2.7.4 Direct quotations

> ➢ In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed" (p. 225).

> "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance," says Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice*, a novel that ends with two happy marriages (ch. 6; 69).

2.2.7.5 Dates

In dates, the year is set off from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas.

> On December 12, 1890, orders were sent out for the arrest of Sitting Bull.

EXCEPTIONS: Commas are not necessary if the date is inverted or if only the month and year are given.

> The security alert system went into effect on 15 April 2009.

> January 2008 was an extremely cold month.

2.2.7.6 Addresses

The elements of an address or a place name are separated with commas. A zip code, however, is not preceded by a comma.

> John Lennon was born in Liverpool, England, in 1940.

> Please send the package to Greg Tarvin at 708 Spring Street, Washington, IL 61571.

2.2.7.7 Personal titles

If a title follows a name, separate the title from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas.

> Sandra Belinsky, MD, has been appointed to the hospital board.

2.2.7.8 Numbers

In numbers more than four digits long, use commas to separate the numbers into groups of three, starting from the right. In numbers four digits long, a comma is optional.

> ➢ 3,500 [*or* 3500]
>
> ➢ 100,000
>
> ➢ 5,000,000

EXCEPTIONS: Do not use commas in street numbers, zip codes, telephone numbers, or years with four or fewer digits.

2.2.8 Use a comma to prevent confusion

In certain situations, a comma is necessary to prevent confusion. If the writer has intentionally left out a word or phrase, for example, a comma may be needed to signal the omission.

> ➢ To err is human; to forgive, divine.

If two words in a row echo each other, a comma may be needed for ease of reading.

> ➢ All of the catastrophes that we had feared might happen, happened.

Sometimes a comma is needed to prevent readers from grouping words in ways that do not match the writer's intention.

> ➢ Patients who can, walk up and down the halls several times a day.

2.3   When Not to Use Commas

Many common misuses of the comma result from misunderstanding of the major comma rules presented earlier.

2.3.1 Do not use a comma between compound elements that are not independent clauses

Though a comma should be used before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses this rule should not be extended to other compound word groups.

> ➢ Marie Curie discovered radium[,] and later applied her work on radioactivity to medicine.

And links two verbs in a compound predicate: *discovered* and *applied*, so should not have a comma.

> ➢ Jake told us that his illness is serious[,] but that changes in his lifestyle can improve his chances for survival.

The coordinating conjunction *but* links two subordinate clauses, each beginning with *that*: *that his illness is serious* and *that changes in his lifestyle*, so should not have a comma.

2.3.2 Do not use a comma to separate a verb from its subject or object.

A sentence should flow from subject to verb to object without unnecessary pauses. Commas may appear between these major sentence elements only when a specific rule calls for them.

Zoos large enough to give the animals freedom to roam[,] are becoming more popular.

The comma should not separate the subject, *Zoos*, from the verb, *are becoming.*

> ➢ Maxine Hong Kingston writes[,] that many Chinese American families struggle "to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America" (107).

The comma should not separate the verb, *writes*, from its object, the subordinate clause beginning with *that*. A signal phrase ending in a word like *writes* or *says* is followed by a comma only when a direct quotation immediately follows: *Kingston writes, "Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world . . ." (107).*

2.3.3 Do not use a comma before the first or after the last item in a series

Though commas are required between items in a series do not place them either before or after the whole series.

> ➢ Other causes of asthmatic attacks are[,] stress, change in temperature, and cold air.
>
> ➢ Ironically, even novels that focus on horror, evil, and alienation[,] often have themes of spiritual renewal and redemption.

2.3.4 Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives, between an adjective and a noun, or between an adverb and an adjective

Commas are required between coordinate adjectives (those that can be joined with *and*), but they do not belong between cumulative adjectives (those that cannot be joined with *and*).

> ➢ In the corner of the closet, we found an old[,] maroon hatbox.

A comma should never be used between an adjective and the noun that follows it.

> ➢ It was a senseless, dangerous[,] mission.

Nor should a comma be used between an adverb and an adjective that follows it.

> ➢ The Hillside is a good home for severely[,] disturbed youths.

2.3.5 Do not use commas to set off restrictive or mildly parenthetical elements

Restrictive elements are modifiers or appositives that restrict the meaning of the nouns they follow. Because they are essential to the meaning of the sentence, they are not set off with commas

Drivers[,] who think they own the road[,] make cycling a dangerous sport.

The modifier *who think they own the road* restricts the meaning of *Drivers* and is therefore essential to the meaning of the sentence. Putting commas around the *who* clause falsely suggests that all drivers think they own the road.

> ➤ Margaret Mead's book[,] *Coming of Age in Samoa*[,] stirred up considerable controversy when it was published in 1928.

Since Mead wrote more than one book, the appositive contains information essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Although commas should be used with distinctly parenthetical expressions, do not use them to set off elements that are only mildly parenthetical.

> ➤ Texting has[,] essentially[,] replaced e-mail for casual communication.

The full sentence Texting has replaced email for casual communication only mildly describes the verb has.

2.3.6 Do not use a comma to set off a concluding adverb clause that is essential to the meaning of the sentence.

When adverb clauses introduce a sentence, they are nearly always followed by a comma. When they conclude a sentence, however, they are not set off by commas if their content is essential to the meaning of the earlier part of the sentence. Adverb clauses beginning with *after*, *as soon as*, *because*, *before*, *if*, *since*, *unless*, *until*, and *when* are usually essential.

> ➤ Don't visit Paris at the height of the tourist season[,] unless you have booked hotel reservations.

Without the *unless* clause, the meaning of the sentence might at first seem broader than the writer intended.

When a concluding adverb clause is nonessential, it should be preceded by a comma. Clauses beginning with *although*, *even though*, *though*, and *whereas* are usually nonessential.

> ➢ The lecture seemed to last only a short time, although the clock said it had gone on for more than an hour.

2.3.7 Do not use a comma after a phrase that begins an inverted sentence.

Though a comma belongs after most introductory phrases, it does not belong after phrases that begin an inverted sentence. In an inverted sentence, the subject follows the verb, and a phrase that ordinarily would follow the verb is moved to the beginning.

> ➢ At the bottom of the hill[,] sat the stubborn mule.

2.3.8 Avoid using commas after a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet)

> ➢ Occasionally TV talk shows are performed live, but[,] more often they are taped.

2.3.9 Avoid using commas after "such" as or "like"

> ➢ Shade-loving plants such as[,] begonias, impatiens, and coleus can add color to a shady garden.

2.3.10   Avoid using commas before "than"

> ➢ Touring Crete was more thrilling for us[,] than visiting the Greek islands frequented by the rich.

2.3.11   Avoid using commas after "although"

> ➢ Although[,] the air was balmy, the water was too cold for swimming.

2.3.12 *Avoid using commas before a parenthesis*

➢ At InterComm, Sylvia began at the bottom[,] (with only three and a half walls and a swivel chair), but within three years she had been promoted to supervisor.

2.3.13 *Avoid using commas after to set off an indirect (reported) quotation*

➢ Samuel Goldwyn once said[,] that a verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

2.3.14 *Avoid using commas after with a question mark or an exclamation point*

➢ "Why don't you try it?[,]" she coaxed. "You can't do any worse than the rest of us."

2.4   Semicolon and colon

The semicolon is used to connect major sentence elements of equal grammatical rank. The colon is used primarily to call attention to the words that follow it and some other conventional uses.

2.4.1 Use a semicolon with independent clauses with no coordinating conjunction

When two independent clauses appear in one sentence, they are usually linked with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet*). The coordinating conjunction signals the relation between the clauses. If the clauses are closely related and the relation is clear without a conjunction, they may be linked with a semicolon instead. Semicolons help you connect closely related ideas when a point stronger than a comma is needed. By using semicolons effectively, you can make your writing sound more sophisticated. Skilled writers

know that they should not overuse the semicolon but merely use for "spicing up" the

text's punctuation, as explained in the following sections.

> In film, a low-angle shot makes the subject look powerful; a high-angle shot does just the
>
> opposite.

2.4.1.1   Between independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction

A semicolon must be used whenever a coordinating conjunction has been omitted between

independent clauses. To use merely a comma creates a type of run-on sentence known as a

comma splice, when two independent clauses are not joined with a coordinating conjunction.

> In 1800, a traveler needed six weeks to get from New York City to Chicago[,]*; in 1860,*
>
> the trip by railroad took as little as two days.

Instead of using a comma after Chicago, the semicolon implies that the two clauses are

grammatically similar. Using a comma will create a comma splice.

2.4.1.2   Between independent clauses with a transitional expression

Transitional expressions include conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases.

Examples of conjunctive adverbs include:

Accordingly	Furthermore	Moreover
Still	Also	Hence
Nevertheless	Subsequently	Anyway
However	Next	Then
Besides	Incidentally	Nonetheless
Therefore	certainly	indeed

Now	thus	consequently
Instead	otherwise	conversely
Likewise	similarly	finally
Meanwhile	specifically	

2.4.1.3   Transitional phrases

after all	even so	in fact
as a matter of fact	for example	in other words
as a result	for instance	in the first place
at any rate	in addition	on the contrary
at the same time	in conclusion	on the other hand

When a transitional expression appears between independent clauses, it is preceded by a semicolon and usually followed by a comma.

> ➢ Many corals grow very gradually[,]*;* in fact, the creation of a coral reef can take centuries.

When a transitional expression appears in the middle or at the end of the second independent clause, the semicolon goes *between the clauses.*

> ➢ Biologists have observed laughter in primates other than humans[,]*;* chimpanzees, however, sound more like they are panting than laughing.

Transitional expressions should not be confused with the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*, which are preceded by a comma when they link independent clauses.

2.4.2 Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

> ➢ Classic science fiction sagas include *Star Trek*, with Captain Kirk, Dr. McCoy, and Mr. Spock[,]*; Battlestar Galactica*, with its Cylons[,]*;* and *Star Wars*, with Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Darth Vader.

Without the semicolons, the reader would have to sort out the major groupings, distinguishing between important and less important pauses according to the logic of the sentence. By inserting semicolons at the major breaks, the writer does this work for the reader.

in the following situations.

2.4.3 Do not use a semicolon between a subordinate clause and the rest of the sentence

> ➢ Although children's literature was added to the National Book Awards in 1969[;], it has had its own award, the Newbery Medal, since 1922.

"It has had…" is a subordinate clause which is separated using a comma

2.4.4 Do not use a semicolon between an appositive and the word it refers to

> ➢ The scientists were fascinated by the species *Argyroneta aquatics[;],* a spider that lives underwater.

"A spider that lives underwater" is an appositive referring to the specie

2.4.5 Do not use a semicolon to introduce a list

Some of my favorite celebrities have their own blogs[;] : Lindsay Lohan, Rosie O'Donnell, and Zach Braff.

2.4.6 Do not use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by *and, but, or, nor, for, so, or* yet

> ➢ Five of the applicants had worked with spreadsheets[;], but only one was familiar with database management.

2.4.7 Use a colon after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, an appositive, a quotation, or a summary or an explanation.

A LIST

The daily routine should include at least the following: twenty knee bends, fifty sit-ups, fifteen leg lifts, and five minutes of running in place.

AN APPOSITIVE

My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.

A QUOTATION

Consider the words of Benjamin Franklin: "There never was a good war or a bad peace."

A SUMMARY OR AN EXPLANATION

Faith is like love: It cannot be forced.

The novel is clearly autobiographical: The author even gives his own name to the main character.

NOTE: When an independent clause follows a colon, it may begin with a capital or a lowercase letter.

2.4.8 Use a colon according to convention

SALUTATION IN A LETTER Dear Sir or Madam:

HOURS AND MINUTES 5:30 p.m.

PROPORTIONS The ratio of women to men was 2:1.

TITLE AND SUBTITLE *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family*

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRIES Boston: Bedford, 2011

NOTE: In biblical references, a colon is ordinarily used between Section and verse (Luke 2:14). The Modern Language Association (MLA) recommends a period instead (Luke 2.14).

2.4.9 Avoid common misuses of the colon.

A colon must be preceded by a full independent clause. Therefore, avoid using it in the following situations.

BETWEEN A VERB AND ITS OBJECT OR COMPLEMENT

> ➢ Some important vitamins found in vegetables are[:] vitamin A, thiamine, niacin, and vitamin C.

BETWEEN A PREPOSITION AND ITS OBJECT

> ➢ The heart's two pumps each consist of[:] an upper chamber, or atrium, and a lower chamber, or ventricle.

AFTER *SUCH AS, INCLUDING*, OR *FOR EXAMPLE*

> ➢ The NCAA regulates college athletic teams, including[:] basketball, baseball, softball, and football.

2.5　The Apostrophe

2.5.1 Use an apostrophe to indicate that a noun or an indefinite pronoun is possessive.

The possessive form of a noun or an indefinite pronoun usually indicates ownership, as in *Tim's hat*, *the lawyer's desk*, or *someone's glove*. Frequently, however, ownership is only loosely implied: *the tree's roots*, *a day's work*. If you are not sure whether a word is possessive, try turning it into an *of* phrase: the roots *of the tree*, the work *of a day*.

2.5.2 When to add -'s to a noun

1. If the noun does not end in *-s*, add *-'s*.

> ➤ Luck often propels a rock musician's career.
>
> ➤ The Children's Defense Fund is a nonprofit organization that supports programs for poor and minority children.

2. If the noun is singular and ends in *-s* or an *s* sound, add *-'s*.

> ➤ Lois's sister spent last year in India.
>
> ➤ Her article presents an overview of Marx's teachings.

NOTE: To avoid potentially awkward pronunciation, some writers use only the apostrophe with a singular noun ending in *-s*: *Sophocles'*.

2.5.3 When to add only an apostrophe to a noun

If the noun is plural and ends in *-s*, add only an apostrophe.

> ➤ Both diplomats' briefcases were searched by guards.

2.5.3.1　Joint possession

To show joint possession, use *-'s* or (*-s'*) with the last noun only; to show individual possession, make all nouns possessive.

> ➢ Have you seen Joyce and Greg's new camper?
>
> ➢ John's and Marie's expectations of marriage couldn't have been more different.

Joyce and Greg jointly own one camper. John and Marie individually have different expectations.

2.5.3.2　Compound nouns

If a noun is compound, use *-'s* (or *-s'*) with the last element.

> ➢ My father-in-law's memoir about his childhood in Sri Lanka was published in October.

2.5.3.3　Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to no specific person or thing: *everyone*, *someone*, *no one*, *something*.

> ➢ Someone's raincoat has been left behind.

2.5.4 Use an apostrophe to mark omissions in contractions and numbers.

In a contraction, the apostrophe takes the place of one or more missing letters.

> ➢ It's a shame that Frank can't go on the tour.
>
> ➢ *It's* stands for *it is*, *can't* for *cannot*.

The apostrophe is also used to mark the omission of the first two digits of a year (*the class of '08*) or years (*the '60s generation*).

2.5.5 *Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of numbers, letters, abbreviations, and words mentioned as words.*

An apostrophe typically is not used to pluralize numbers, letters, abbreviations, and words mentioned as words. Note the few exceptions and be consistent throughout your paper.

2.5.5.1   Plural of numbers

Do not use an apostrophe in the plural of any numbers, including decades.

> ➢ Oksana skated nearly perfect figure 8s.
>
> ➢ The 1920s are known as the Jazz Age.

2.5.5.2   Plural of letters

Italicize the letter and use roman (regular) font style for the *-s* ending. Do not italicize academic grades.

> ➢ Two large *J*s were painted on the door.
>
> ➢ He received two Ds for the first time in his life.

EXCEPTIONS: To avoid misreading, use an apostrophe to form the plural of lowercase letters and the capital letters *A* and *I*: *p'*s, *A'*s.

> ➢ Beginning readers often confuse *b*'s and *d*'s.

MLA NOTE: The Modern Language Association recommends using an apostrophe for the plural of both capital and lowercase letters: *J'*s, *p'*s.

2.5.5.3   Plural of abbreviations

Do not use an apostrophe to pluralize an abbreviation.

> ➢ Harriet has thirty DVDs on her desk.

> Marco earned two PhDs before his thirtieth birthday.

2.5.5.4 Plural of words mentioned as words

Generally, omit the apostrophe to form the plural of words mentioned as words. If the word is italicized, the *-s* ending appears in roman (regular) type.

> We've heard enough *maybe*s.

Words mentioned as words may also appear in quotation marks. When you choose this option, use the apostrophe.

> We've heard enough "maybe's."

2.5.6 Avoid common misuses of the apostrophe.

Do not use an apostrophe in the following situations.

2.5.6.1 With nouns that are not possessive

> Some outpatient[']s have special parking permits.

2.5.6.2 In the possessive pronouns *its*, *whose, his, hers, ours, yours*, and *theirs*

> Each area has it[']s own conference room.

It's means "it is." The possessive pronoun *its* contains no apostrophe despite the fact that it is possessive.

> *The House on Mango Street* was written by Sandra Cisneros, *whose* [not who's] work focuses on the Latino community in the United States.

Who's means "who is." The possessive pronoun is *whose*.

2.5.6.3   Quotation marks

Writers use quotation marks primarily to enclose direct quotations of another person's spoken or written words. You will also find these other uses and exceptions:

• for quotations within quotations

• for titles of short works

• for words used as words

• with other marks of punctuation

• with brackets and ellipsis marks

• no quotation marks for long quotations

• no quotation marks for indirect quotations, summaries, and paraphrases

2.5.6.4   Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations.

Direct quotations of a person's words, whether spoken or written, must be in quotation marks.

> ➤ "The contract negotiations are stalled," the airline executive told reporters, "but I am
>
>   prepared to work night and day to bring both sides together."

In dialogue, begin a new paragraph to mark a change in speaker.

> ➤ "Mom, his name is Willie, not William. A thousand times I've told you, it's *Willie*."
>
> ➤ "Willie is a derivative of William, Lester. Surely his birth certificate doesn't have Willie
>
>   on it, and I like calling people by their proper names."
>
> ➤ "Yes, it does, ma'am. My mother named me Willie K. Mason."
>
>   — Gloria Naylor

If a single speaker utters more than one paragraph, introduce each paragraph with a quotation mark, but do not use a closing quotation mark until the end of the speech.

2.5.6.5 Exception: indirect quotations

Do not use quotation marks around indirect quotations. An indirect quotation reports someone's ideas without using that person's exact words. In academic writing, indirect quotation is called *paraphrase* or *summary*.

> ➢ The airline executive told reporters that although contract negotiations were at a standstill, she was prepared to work hard with both labor and management to bring about a settlement.

2.5.6.6 Exception: long quotations

Long quotations of prose or poetry are generally set off from the text by indenting. Quotation marks are not used because the indented format tells readers that the quotation is taken word-for-word from the source.

> ➢ After making an exhaustive study of the historical record, James Horan evaluates Billy the Kid like this:

> > The portrait that emerges of [the Kid] from the thousands of pages of affidavits, reports, trial transcripts, his letters, and his testimony is neither the mythical Robin Hood nor the stereotyped adenoidal moron and pathological killer. Rather Billy appears as a disturbed, lonely young man, honest, loyal to his friends, dedicated to his beliefs, and betrayed by our institutions and the corrupt, ambitious, and compromising politicians in his time. (158)

The number in parentheses is a citation handled according to MLA style.

MLA, APA, and CMS (*Chicago*) have specific guidelines for what constitutes a long quotation and how it should be indented.

2.5.7 Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

➢ Megan Marshall notes that what Elizabeth Peabody "hoped to accomplish in her school was not merely 'teaching' but 'educating children morally and spiritually as well as intellectually from the first' " (107).

2.5.8 Use quotation marks around the titles of short works.

Short works include newspaper and magazine articles, poems, short stories, songs, episodes of television and radio programs, and Sections or subdivisions of books.

➢ James Baldwin's story "Sonny's Blues" tells the story of two brothers who come to understand each other's suffering.

NOTE: Titles of books, plays, Web sites, television and radio programs, films, magazines, and newspapers are put in italics.

2.5.9 Quotation marks may be used to set off words used as words.

Although words used as words are ordinarily italicized, quotation marks are also acceptable. Be consistent throughout your paper.

➢ The words "accept" and "except" are frequently confused.

➢ The words *accept* and *except* are frequently confused.

2.5.10   *Use punctuation with quotation marks according to convention*

This section describes the conventions American publishers use in placing various marks of punctuation inside or outside quotation marks. It also explains how to punctuate when introducing quoted material.

2.5.10.1 Periods and commas

Place periods and commas inside quotation marks.

> ➢ "I'm here as part of my service-learning project," I told the classroom teacher. "I'm hoping to become a reading specialist."

This rule applies to single quotation marks as well as double quotation marks. It also applies to all uses of quotation marks: for quoted material, for titles of works, and for words used as words.

EXCEPTION: In the Modern Language Association's style of parenthetical in-text citations the period follows the citation in parentheses.

> ➢ James M. McPherson comments, approvingly, that the Whigs "were not averse to extending the blessings of American liberty, even to Mexicans and Indians" (48).

2.5.10.2 Colons and semicolons

Put colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

> ➢ Harold wrote, "I regret that I am unable to attend the fundraiser for AIDS research"; his letter, however, came with a substantial contribution.

2.5.10.3 Question marks and exclamation points

Put question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks unless they apply to the whole sentence.

> Contrary to tradition, bedtime at my house is marked by "Mommy, can I tell you a story now?"

> Have you heard the old proverb "Do not climb the hill until you reach it"?

In the first sentence, the question mark applies only to the quoted question. In the second sentence, the question mark applies to the whole sentence.

NOTE: In MLA style for a quotation that ends with a question mark or an exclamation point, the parenthetical citation and a period should follow the entire quotation.

> Rosie Thomas asks, "Is nothing in life ever straight and clear, the way children see it?" (77).

2.5.10.4 Introducing quoted material

After a word group introducing a quotation, choose a colon, a comma, or no punctuation at all, whichever is appropriate in context.

FORMAL INTRODUCTION If a quotation is formally introduced, a colon is appropriate. A formal introduction is a full independent clause, not just an expression such as *he said* or *she remarked.*

> Thomas Friedman provides a challenging yet optimistic view of the future: "We need to get back to work on our country and on our planet. The hour is late, the stakes couldn't be higher, the project couldn't be harder, the payoff couldn't be greater" (25).

EXPRESSION SUCH AS *HE SAID* If a quotation is introduced with an expression such as *he said* or *she remarked* — or if it is followed by such an expression — a comma is needed.

> About New England's weather, Mark Twain once declared, "In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather within four and twenty hours" (55).

> "Unless another war is prevented it is likely to bring destruction on a scale never before held possible and even now hardly conceived," Albert Einstein wrote in the aftermath of the atomic bomb (29).

BLENDED QUOTATION When a quotation is blended into the writer's own sentence, either a comma or no punctuation is appropriate, depending on the way in which the quotation fits into the sentence structure.

> The future champion could, as he put it, "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee."

> Virginia Woolf wrote in 1928 that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4).

BEGINNING OF SENTENCE If a quotation appears at the beginning of a sentence, use a comma after it unless the quotation ends with a question mark or an exclamation point.

> "I've always thought of myself as a reporter," claimed American poet Gwendolyn Brooks (162).

> "What is it?" she asked, bracing herself.

INTERRUPTED QUOTATION If a quoted sentence is interrupted by explanatory words, use commas to set off the explanatory words.

> "With regard to air travel," Stephen Ambrose notes, "Jefferson was a full century ahead of the curve" (53).

If two successive quoted sentences from the same source are interrupted by explanatory words, use a comma before the explanatory words and a period after them.

> "Everyone agrees journalists must tell the truth," Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write. "Yet people are befuddled about what 'the truth' means" (37).

Avoid common misuses of quotation marks.

Do not use quotation marks to draw attention to familiar slang, to disown trite expressions, or to justify an attempt at humor.

> ➢ The economist estimated that single-family home prices would decline another 5 percent by the end of the year, emphasizing that this was only a ["]ballpark figure.["]

Do not use quotation marks around the title of your own essay.

2.5.11   Examples of Correct and Incorrect Uses of Quotes and Apostrophes

Rule 1a. Use the **apostrophe** to show possession. To show possession with a singular noun, add an apostrophe plus the letter *s*.

Examples:

a woman's hat

the boss's wife

Mrs. Chang's house

Rule 1b. Many common nouns end in the letter *s* (*lens, cactus, bus*, etc.). So do a lot of proper nouns (*Mr. Jones, Texas, Christmas*). There are conflicting policies and theories about how to show possession when writing such nouns. There is no right answer; the best advice is to choose a formula and stay consistent.

Rule 1c. Some writers and editors add only an apostrophe to all nouns ending in *s*. And some add an apostrophe + *s* to every proper noun, be it *Hastings's* or *Jones's*.

One method, common in newspapers and magazines, is to add an apostrophe + *s* ('*s*) to common nouns ending in *s*, but only a stand-alone apostrophe to proper nouns ending in *s*.

Examples:

the class's hours

Mr. Jones' golf clubs

the canvas's size

Texas' weather

Care must be taken to place the apostrophe outside the word in question. For instance, if talking about a pen belonging to Mr. Hastings, many people would wrongly write *Mr. Hasting's pen* (his name is not Mr. Hasting).

Correct: *Mr. Hastings' pen*

Another widely used technique is to write the word as we would speak it. For example, since most people saying "Mr. Hastings' pen" would not pronounce an added *s*, we would write *Mr. Hastings' pen* with no added *s*. But most people would pronounce an added *s* in "Jones's," so we'd write it as we say it: *Mr. Jones's golf clubs.* This method explains the punctuation of *for goodness' sake.*

Rule 2a. **Regular nouns** are nouns that form their plurals by adding either the letter *s* or *-es* (*guy, guys; letter, letters; actress, actresses;* etc.). To show plural possession, simply put an apostrophe after the *s*.

Correct: *guys' night out* (*guy* + *s* + apostrophe)

Incorrect: *guy's night out* (implies only one guy)

Correct: *two actresses' roles* (*actress* + *es* + apostrophe)

Incorrect: *two actress's roles*

Rule 2b. Do not use an apostrophe + *s* to make a regular noun plural.

Incorrect: *Apostrophe's are confusing.*

Correct: *Apostrophes are confusing.*

Incorrect: *We've had many happy Christmas's.*

Correct: *We've had many happy Christmases.*

In special cases, such as when forming a plural of a word that is not normally a noun, some writers add an apostrophe for clarity.

Example: *Here are some do's and don'ts.*

In that sentence, the verb *do* is used as a plural noun, and the apostrophe was added because the writer felt that *dos* was confusing. Not all writers agree; some see no problem with *dos* and *don'ts.*

However, with single lowercase letters, it is advisable to use apostrophes.

Example: *My a's look like u's.*

Imagine the confusion if you wrote that sentence without apostrophes. Readers would see *as* and *us*, and feel lost.

Rule 2c. English also has many **irregular nouns** (*child, nucleus, tooth*, etc.). These nouns become plural by changing their spelling, sometimes becoming quite different words. You may find it helpful to write out the entire irregular plural noun before adding an apostrophe or an apostrophe + *s*.

Incorrect: *two childrens' hats*

The plural is *children*, not *childrens*.

Correct: *two children's hats* (*children* + apostrophe + *s*)

Incorrect: *the teeths' roots*

Correct: *the teeth's roots*

Rule 2d. Things can get really confusing with the possessive plurals of proper names ending in *s*, such as *Hastings* and *Jones*.

If you're the guest of the Ford family—the *Fords*—you're the *Fords'* guest (*Ford* + *s* + apostrophe). But what if it's the *Hastings* family?

Most would call them the "Hastings." But that would refer to a family named "Hasting." If someone's name ends in *s*, we must add *-es* for the plural. The plural of *Hastings* is *Hastingses*. The members of the Jones family are the *Joneses*.

To show possession, add an apostrophe.

Incorrect: *the Hastings' dog*

Correct: *the Hastingses' dog* (*Hastings* + *es* + apostrophe)

Incorrect: *the Jones' car*

Correct: *the Joneses' car*

In serious writing, this rule must be followed no matter how strange or awkward the results.

Rule 2e. Never use an apostrophe to make a name plural.

Incorrect: *The Wilson's are here.*

Correct: *The Wilsons are here.*

Incorrect: *We visited the Sanchez's.*

Correct: *We visited the Sanchezes.*

Rule 3. With a singular compound noun (for example, *mother-in-law*), show possession with an apostrophe + *s* at the end of the word.

Example: *my mother-in-law's hat*

If the compound noun (e.g., *brother-in-law*) is to be made plural, form the plural first (*brothers-in-law*), and then use the apostrophe + *s.*

Example: *my two brothers-in-law's hats*

Rule 4. If two people possess the same item, put the apostrophe + *s* after the second name only.

Example: *Cesar and Maribel's home is constructed of redwood.*

However, if one of the joint owners is written as a pronoun, use the possessive form for both.

Incorrect: *Maribel and my home*

Correct: *Maribel's and my home*

Incorrect: *he and Maribel's home*

Incorrect: *him and Maribel's home*

Correct: *his and Maribel's home*

In cases of separate rather than joint possession, use the possessive form for both.

Examples:

Cesar's and Maribel's homes are both lovely.

They don't own the homes jointly.

Cesar and Maribel's homes are both lovely.

The homes belong to both of them.

Rule 5. Use an apostrophe with **contractions**. The apostrophe is placed where a letter or letters have been removed.

Examples: *doesn't, it's, 'tis, can't, you'd, should've, rock 'n' roll,* etc.

Incorrect: *does'nt*

Rule 6. There are various approaches to plurals for abbreviations, single letters, and numerals.

Many writers and editors prefer an apostrophe after single capitalized letters.

Example: *I made straight A's.*

With groups of two or more capital letters, apostrophes seem less necessary.

Examples:

There are two new MPs on the base.

He learned his ABCs.

She consulted with three M.D.s. **OR** *She consulted with three M.D.'s.*

Some write *M.D.'s* to give the *s* separation from the second period.

Single-digit numbers are usually spelled out, but when they aren't, you are just as likely to see *2s and 3s* as *2's and 3's.* With double digits and above, many (but not everyone) regard the apostrophe as superfluous: *I scored in the high 90s.*

There are different schools of thought about years and decades. The following examples are all in widespread use:

Examples:

the 1990s

the 1990's

the '90s

the 90's

Awkward: *the '90's*

Rule 7. Amounts of time or money are sometimes used as possessive adjectives that require apostrophes.

Incorrect: *three days leave*

Correct: *three days' leave*

Incorrect: *my two cents worth*

Correct: *my two cents' worth*

Rule 8. The personal pronouns *hers, ours, yours, theirs, its, whose*, and the pronoun *oneself* never take an apostrophe.

Examples:

Correct: *Feed a horse grain. It's better for its health.*

Incorrect: *Who's glasses are these?*

Correct: *Whose glasses are these?*

Incorrect: *Talking to one's self in public is odd.*

Correct: *Talking to oneself in public is odd.*

Rule 9. When an apostrophe comes before a word or number, take care that it's truly an apostrophe (') rather than a single quotation mark (').

Incorrect: '*Twas the night before Christmas.*

Correct: '*Twas the night before Christmas.*

Incorrect: I voted in '08.

Correct: I voted in '08.

2.5.11.1 Apostrophes with Names Ending in s, ch, or z

Are you confused about how to show the plural and the possessive of certain names? Maybe you know to write *I met the Smiths*, *I drove Brenda Smith's Ferrari*, and *I visited the Smiths' house*. But what if the name is *Sanchez* or *Church* or *Williams*?

Rule: To show the plural of a name that ends with a *ch*, *s*, or *z* sound, add *es*. If a name ends in *ch*, but is pronounced with a hard *k* sound, its plural will require *s*, rather than *es*.

Examples:

The Sanchezes will be over soon.

The Thomases moved away.

The Churches have arrived but the Bohmbachs are running late.

Rule: To show singular possession of a name ending in *ch*, add *'s* on the end of the name.

Example:

Harry Birch's house

Rule: To show singular possession of a name ending in *s* or *z*, some writers add just an apostrophe. Others also add another *s*.

Examples:

Bill Williams' car **OR** *Bill Williams's car*

Mrs. Sanchez's children

Rule: To show plural possession of a name ending in *s*, *ch*, or *z*, form the plural first; then immediately use the apostrophe.

Examples:

the Williamses' car

the Birches' house

the Sanchezes' children

2.6 The Dash

When typing, use two hyphens to form a dash (--). Do not put spaces before or after the dash. If your word processing program has what is known as an "em-dash" (—), you may use it instead, with no space before or after it. A dash can be used to set off parenthetical material that deserves emphasis.

> ➢ Everything that went wrong — from the peeping Tom at Theodora's window last night to my head-on collision today — we blamed on our move.

A pair of dashes is useful to enclose an appositive that contains commas. An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames a nearby noun. Ordinarily appositives are set off with commas, but when the appositive itself contains commas, a pair of dashes helps readers see the relative importance of all the pauses.

> ➢ In my hometown, the basic needs of people — food, clothing, and shelter — are less costly than in a big city like Los Angeles.

A dash is a dramatic, somewhat informal way to introduce a list, a restatement, an amplification, or a striking shift in tone or thought.

> ➢ Along the wall are the bulk liquids — sesame seed oil, honey, safflower oil, and that half-liquid "peanuts only" peanut butter.

> ➢ In his last semester, Peter tried to pay more attention to his priorities — applying to graduate school, getting financial aid, and finding a roommate.

> ➢ Everywhere we looked there were little kids — a box of Cracker Jacks in one hand and Mommy or Daddy's sleeve in the other.

> ➢ Kiere took a few steps back, came running full speed, kicked a mighty kick — and missed the ball.

In the first two examples, the writer could also use a colon. The colon is more formal than the dash and not quite as dramatic.

TIP: Unless there is a specific reason for using the dash, avoid it. Unnecessary dashes create a choppy effect.

> ➢ Insisting that students use computers as instructional tools [--]for information retrieval[--] makes good sense. Herding them [--] sheeplike[--] into computer technology does not.

2.7   Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose supplemental material, minor digressions, and afterthoughts.

> ➢ Nurses record patients' vital signs (temperature, pulse, and blood pressure) several times a day.

Use parentheses to enclose letters or numbers labeling items in a series.

> ➢ Regulations stipulated that only the following equipment could be used on the survival mission: (1) a knife, (2) thirty feet of parachute line, (3) a book of matches, (4) a poncho, (5) an E tool, and (6) a signal flare.

TIP: Do not overuse parentheses. Rough drafts are likely to contain more afterthoughts than necessary. As writers head into a sentence, they often think of additional details, occasionally working them in as best they can with parentheses. Usually such sentences should be revised so that the additional details no longer seem to be afterthoughts.

> ➤ Researchers have said that ***from*** seventeen million [(]~~estimates run as high as~~ ***to*** twenty-three million[)] Americans have diabetes.

2.8 Brackets

Use brackets to enclose any words or phrases that you have inserted into an otherwise word-for-word quotation.

> ➤ *Audubon* reports that "if there are not enough young to balance deaths, the end of the species [California condor] is inevitable" (4).

The sentence quoted from the *Audubon* article did not contain the words *California condor* (since the context of the full article made clear what species was meant), so the writer needed to add the name in brackets.

The Latin word "sic" in brackets indicates that an error in a quoted sentence appears in the original source.

> ➤ According to the review, Nelly Furtado's performance was brilliant, "exceding [sic] the expectations of even her most loyal fans."

Do not overuse "sic," however, since calling attention to others' mistakes can appear snobbish. The preceding quotation, for example, might have been paraphrased instead: *According to the review, even Nelly Furtado's most loyal fans were surprised by the brilliance of her performance.*

2.9 The Ellipsis Mark

The ellipsis mark consists of three spaced periods. Use an ellipsis mark to indicate that you have deleted words from an otherwise word-for-word quotation.

> ➢ Reuben reports that "when the amount of cholesterol circulating in the blood rises over . . . 300 milligrams per 100, the chances of a heart attack increase dramatically."

If you delete a full sentence or more in the middle of a quoted passage, use a period before the three ellipsis dots.

> ➢ "Most of our efforts," writes Dave Erikson, "are directed toward saving the bald eagle's wintering habitat along the Mississippi River. . . . It's important that the wintering birds have a place to

roost, where they can get out of the cold wind."

TIP: Ordinarily, do not use the ellipsis mark at the beginning or at the end of a quotation. Readers will understand that the quoted material is taken from a longer passage. If you have cut some words from the end of the final quoted sentence, however, MLA requires an ellipsis

Mark. In quoted poetry, use a full line of ellipsis dots to indicate that you have dropped a line or more from the poem, as in this example from "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell:

> ➢ Had we but world enough, and time,
>
> ➢ This coyness, lady, were no crime.
>
> ➢ . . . .
>
> ➢ But at my back I always hear
>
> ➢ Time's winged chariot hurrying near; (1-2, 21-22)

The ellipsis mark may also be used to indicate a hesitation or an interruption in speech or to suggest unfinished thoughts.

> ➢ "The apartment building next door . . . it's going up in flames!" yelled Marcia.

> ➢ Before falling into a coma, the victim whispered, "It was a man with a tattoo on his . . . "

2.10 The Slash

Use the slash to separate two or three lines of poetry that have been run into your text. Add a space both before and after the slash.

> ➢ In the opening lines of "Jordan," George Herbert pokes gentle fun at popular poems of his time: "Who says that fictions only and false hair / Become a verse? Is there in truth no beauty?" (1-2).

More than three lines of poetry should be handled as an indented quotation.

The slash may occasionally be used to separate paired terms such as *pass*/*fail* and *producer*/*director*. Do not use a space before or after the slash. Be sparing in this use of the slash. In particular, avoid the use of *and*/*or*, *he*/*she*, and *his*/*her.* Instead of using *he*/*she* and *his*/*her* to solve sexist language problems, you can usually find more graceful alternatives.

2.11 Hyphenation

The dictionary will tell you whether to treat a compound word as a hyphenated compound (*water-repellent*), one word (*waterproof*), or two words (*water table*). If the compound word is not in the dictionary, treat it as two words.

> ➢ The prosecutor chose not to cross-examine any witnesses.
>
> ➢ All students are expected to record their data in a small note book.
>
> ➢ Alice walked through the looking[-]glass into a backward world.

"Looking glass" doesn't use a hyphen

2.11.1 Hyphenate two or more words used together as an adjective before a noun.

> ➢ Mrs. Douglas gave Toshiko a seashell and some newspaper-wrapped fish to take home to her mother.

> ➢ Richard Gupta is not yet a well-known candidate.

Newspaper-wrapped and *well-known* are adjectives used before the nouns *fish* and *candidate.*

Generally, do not use a hyphen when such compounds follow the noun.

> ➢ After our television campaign, Richard Gupta will be well[-] known.

Do not use a hyphen to connect *-ly* adverbs to the words they modify.

> ➢ A slowly[-]moving truck tied up traffic.

NOTE: When two or more hyphenated adjectives in a row modify the same noun, you can suspend the hyphens.

> ➢ Do you prefer first-, second-, or third-class tickets?

Hyphenate fractions and certain numbers when they are spelled out.

For numbers written in words, use a hyphen in all fractions and in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

> ➢ One-fourth of my income pays for child care, and one-third pays the rent.

> ➢ The private foundation is funneling more money into self-help projects.

> ➢ The Student Senate bylaws require the president-elect to attend all senate meetings between the election and the official transfer of office.

2.11.2   Use a hyphen in certain words to avoid ambiguity or to separate awkward double or triple letters.

Without the hyphen, there would be no way to distinguish between words such as *re-creation* and *recreation.*

> ➢ Bicycling in the city is my favorite form of recreation.
>
> ➢ The film was praised for its astonishing re-creation of nineteenth-century London.

Hyphens are sometimes used to separate awkward double or triple letters in compound words (*anti-intellectual*, *cross-stitch*). Always check a dictionary for the standard form of the word.

Some word processing programs and other computer applications automatically generate word breaks at the ends of lines. When you're writing an academic paper, it's best to set your computer application not to hyphenate automatically. This setting will ensure that only words already containing a hyphen (such as *long-distance*, *pre-Roman*) will be hyphenated at the ends of lines. E-mail addresses, URLs, and other electronic addresses need special attention when they occur at the end of a line of text or in bibliographic citations. You can't rely on your computer application to divide these terms correctly, so you must make a decision in each case. Do not insert a hyphen to divide electronic addresses. Instead, break an e-mail address after the @ symbol or before a period. Break a URL after a slash or a double slash or before any other punctuation mark.

> ➢ I repeatedly e-mailed Janine at janine.r.rose@dunbaracademy
>
> .org before I gave up and called her cell phone.
>
> ➢ To find a zip code quickly, I always use the United States Postal Service Web site at
>
> http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/
>
> welcome.jsp.

2.12 Capitalization

In addition to the rules in this section, a good dictionary can tell you when to use capital letters.

2.12.1 Capitalize proper nouns and words derived from them; do not capitalize common nouns

Proper nouns are the names of specific persons, places, and things. All other nouns are common nouns. The following types of words are usually capitalized: *names of deities, religions, religious followers, sacred books; words of family relationship used as names; particular places;*

nationalities and their languages, races, tribes; educational institutions, departments, degrees, particular courses; government departments, organizations, political parties; historical movements, periods, events, documents; specific electronic sources; and trade names.

PROPER NOUNS	COMMON NOUNS
God (used as a name)	a god
Book of Common Prayer	a sacred book
Uncle Pedro	my uncle
Father (used as a name)	my father
Lake Superior	a picturesque lake
the Capital Center	a center for advanced studies
the South	a southern state
Wrigley Field	a baseball stadium
University of Wisconsin	a state university
Geology 101	geology
Environmental Protection Agency	a federal agency

Phi Kappa Psi	a fraternity
a Democrat	an independent
the Enlightenment	the eighteenth century
the Treaty of Versailles	a treaty
the World Wide Web, the Web	a home page
the Internet, the Net	a computer network
Advil	a painkiller

Months, holidays, and days of the week are treated as proper nouns; the seasons and numbers of the days of the month are not.

> ➢ Our academic year begins on a Tuesday in early September, right after Labor Day.
>
> ➢ Graduation is in early summer, on the second of June.

EXCEPTION: Capitalize Fourth of July (or July Fourth) when referring to the holiday.

Names of school subjects are capitalized only if they are names of languages. Names of particular courses are capitalized.

> ➢ This semester Austin is taking math, geography, geology, French, and English.
>
> ➢ Professor Obembe offers Modern American Fiction 501 to graduate students.

CAUTION: Do not capitalize common nouns to make them seem important: *Our company is currently hiring computer programmers* (not *Company, Computer Programmers*).

2.12.2 *Capitalize titles of persons when used as part of a proper name but usually not when used alone.*

Professor Margaret Barnes; Dr. Sinyee Sein; John Scott Williams Jr.

> ➤ District Attorney Marshall was reprimanded for badgering the witness.
>
> ➤ The district attorney was elected for a two-year term.

Usage varies when the title of an important public figure is used alone:

> ➤ The *president* [or President] vetoed the bill.

2.12.3 *Capitalize the first, last, and all major words in titles and subtitles of works.*

In both titles and subtitles of works (books, articles, songs, artwork, and online documents) major words — nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs — should be capitalized. Minor words — articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions — are not capitalized unless they are the first or last word of a title or subtitle.

Capitalize the second part of a hyphenated term in a title if it is a major word but not if it is a minor word. Capitalize Section titles and the titles of other major divisions of a work following the same guidelines used for titles of complete works.

> ➤ *Seizing the Enigma: The Race to Break the German U-Boat Codes*
>
> ➤ *A River Runs through It*
>
> ➤ "I Want to Hold Your Hand"
>
> ➤ *The Canadian Green Page*

Some of the titles in the list are italicized because they are titles of publications.

2.12.4   *Capitalize the first word of a sentence.*

The first word of a sentence should be capitalized. When a sentence appears within parentheses, capitalize its first word unless the parentheses appear within another sentence.

> ➢ Early detection of breast cancer significantly increases survival rates. (See table 2.)
>
> ➢ Early detection of breast cancer significantly increases survival rates (see table 2). (Note the single period in this sentence compared to the previous example)

Capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence but not a quoted phrase.

> ➢ Robert Hughes writes, "There are only about sixty Watteau paintings on whose authenticity all experts agree" (102).
>
> ➢ Russell Baker has written that in this country, sports are "the opiate of the masses" (46).

If a quoted sentence is interrupted by explanatory words, do not capitalize the first word after the interruption.

> ➢ "If you want to go out," he said, "tell me now."

When quoting poetry, copy the poet's capitalization exactly. Many poets capitalize the first word of every line of poetry; a few contemporary poets dismiss capitalization altogether.

> ➢ it was the week that
>
> ➢ i felt the city's narrow breezes rush about me — Don L. Lee

2.12.5   *Capitalize the first word after a colon if it begins an independent clause.*

If a word group following a colon could stand on its own as a complete sentence, capitalize the first word.

> ➢ Clinical trials called into question the safety profile of the drug: A high percentage of participants reported hypertension and kidney problems.

Preferences vary among academic disciplines.

Always use lowercase for a list or an appositive that follows a colon.

> ➢ Students were divided into two groups: residents and commuters.

2.12.6   Capitalize abbreviations according to convention.

Abbreviations for government agencies, companies, and other organizations as well as call numbers for radio and television stations are capitalized.

EPA, FBI, DKNY, IBM, WCRB, KNBC-TV

References

This research writing guide gathers materials taken from the following following texts and references and uses excerpts from them. Please refer to them for complete guidance.

Thurman, S. (2003). *The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need*. Avon, MA: Adams Media.

Hacker, D., & Sommers, N. (2011). *A Writer's Reference* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

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Section 3: Developing Sentences

3.1 Improving the Simple Sentence

Sentences come in seemingly endless variety of shapes and sizes: some stretch out for line upon line; others stop short after two or three words. The basic structure of the sentence was covered in Section 1 Mechanics. In that section, the parts that make up the sentence and the different types of sentences: the simple sentence, the compound sentence, the complex sentence and the compound-complex sentences, were introduced. This section elaborates on how to structure those sentence to enhance research writing.

The simple sentence must be grammatically complete, must contain a finite verb and one independent clause. A finite verb is one limited with reference to number, person, or tense. Nonfinite verbs (infinitives and participles) like *walking* will become a finite verb because it contains helping verbs (auxiliaries) like *is, has, does, will* and so on ("John is walking"). One independent clause contains one subject-verb connection. It can contain two or more subjects and two or more verbs, but as long as the connection is single, it is simple.

> ➤ All the men and women in the room stood up and cheered.

This example has two subjects ("men" and "women") and two verbs ("stood up" and "cheered"), but only one nexus or connection.

3.1.1 The Power of the Simple Sentence

When composing your sentences, keep most of them as simple as possible. Sentences that contain several ideas, are too long, or are complicated are the most difficult for your readers to understand. Try keeping most of your sentences short and to the point. Each sentence should have a noun, adjective, and a verb and should convey one main idea. If you follow this rule,

then you'll express ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety. Consider the following examples:

> ➢ I was very excited to be leaving home on my way to college. I was not just happy to be going to a new place but I was also going to be learning new ideas and meeting a large variety of new people which would hopefully lead to many fun and interesting new experiences.

The second sentence in the passage above is a listing of several smaller ideas that have been combined into a sentence that is too long and difficult to follow. Watch what happens when the ideas are split into several shorter sentences:

> ➢ I was very excited to be leaving home on my way to college. I was happy to be going to a new place. I would be learning new ideas and I would be meeting a large variety of new people. I hoped that all this would lead to many fun and interesting new experiences.

The same ideas are present in the second example but they are each given their own simple sentence. This construction is much easier for the audience to follow because it does not involve remembering a list of items from one extremely long sentence.

Keeping your sentences and your essay construction simple is one of the easiest ways to ensure readability. Overly complex word choices and/or sentence construction will only alienate your audience. Remember, you want your audience to understand both your purpose for writing the essay and your specific message. Do not risk confusing your message with complicated word choice and/or sentence construction.

Simple sentences can be very effective when setting up a topic at the beginning of a paragraph. Simple sentences when strategically placed also creates emphasis and variety.

A simple sentence can be short and can be very long. Compound phrases help turn short sentences into longer, meatier ones. Compound phrases can be used to represent:

3.1.1.1 Addition

> - Presidential election campaigns have become long. Presidential campaigns have become expensive.
>
> - COMBINED: Presidential campaigns have become long and expensive

> - Ants crawled over the floor.
>
> - They crawled up the wall.
>
> - They crawled up the counter.
>
> - They crawled into the honey pot.
>
> - COMBINED: Ants crawled over the floor, up the wall, onto the counter, and into the honey pot.
>
> - The witness blushed.
>
> - He cleared his throat.
>
> - He began to speak in a halting manner.
>
> - COMBINED: The witness blushed, cleared his throat, and began to speak in a halting manner.

3.1.1.2 Contrast

➤ Marketing U.S. products in Japan is difficult.

➤ But it is not impossible.

➤ COMBINED: Marketing U.S. products in Japan is difficult but not impossible.

3.1.1.3 Choice

➤ The government must reduce its spending.

➤ Or it must raise taxes.

➤ COMBINED: The government must either reduce its spending or raise taxes.

3.1.2 Simple Sentences that are poorly structured

Simple sentences can also be misused. Usually this takes the shape of a series of simple

sentences that are too simple, sounds immature and fails to establish the subtle relationships of

thought and feeling.

➤ POOR EXAMPLE. My uncle teaches physics. He is short and stout and about forty-five.

He has no personality at all.

Various sentence structures can improve these short meager sentences.

➤ A teacher of physics, short, stout, about forty-five, my uncle has no personality at all.

➤ A teacher of physics with no personality at all, my uncle is short, stout, and about forty-

five.

➤ My uncle is a teacher of physics—short, stout, about forty-five, and with no personality

at all.

The first example consists of a prepositional and adjective phrase (see Section 2 Mechanics for details) followed by an independent clause separated by a comma. The prepositional phrase represents an introduction, so is separated by a comma from the main part of the sentence, "my uncle has no personality at all."

The second example switches its main part to the adjective phrase, making it an independent clause.

The third example has the most emphasis using a dash to separate the adjective phrase from the main clause.

3.1.2.1 Expletive construction -- composing by putting the subject after the verb

The subject of a declarative sentence—a sentence that makes a statement—usually precedes the verb. But in these sentences the subject follows the verb (in italics):

> ➢ There were *riots* in the occupied territories
>
> ➢ It is hard to *read small print*

In these sentences *there* and *it* are introductory words or expletives. They are not part of either the subject or the object. Expletive constructions are phrases such as:

it is

there is

there are

The words *there* or *it* can function as adverbs to describe and respond to the question of where? Or who? But in this case, *it* does not function as adverbs. In fact, *it* does not function as anything, which is why they are called expletives (meaning something that fills out, in this case

the sentence, but does not carry any meaning). Try to avoid using them, since these constructions merely obscure the main subject and action of a sentence.

> **Expletive:** It was her last argument that finally persuaded me.

> **Correction:** Her last argument finally persuaded me.

> **Expletive:** There are likely to be many researchers raising questions about this methodological approach.

> **Correction:** Many researchers are likely to raise questions about this methodological approach.

> **Expletive:** It is inevitable that oil prices will rise.

> **Correction:** Oil prices will inevitably rise.

There are endless ways of composing the simple sentence.

Here are some examples:

Using verb auxiliaries:

Modal	Have	Be	Main Verb
Can			happen
	Has		arrived
Could	have		called
		Is	waiting
Should	have	been	revised

Verb	Complement

Be   a man

	Verb	Subject
There	were	few survivors

Predicate completed by two or more complements

Subject	Action verb	Complement	Complement
The student	reads	a book (direct object)	
Fred	called	his roommate	a liar

Subject	Linking verb	Complement
He	may be	your brother (noun)
The food	tasted	good (adverb)
Speeding (verbals)	causes	accidents (noun)
He	refused	to pay (infinitive) his dues (object)
Courtesy	forbids	calling (gerund) a policeman a cop (object)

Modifiers

Adjectives modify nouns, adverbs modify verbs

The bell	rang	twice (adverb)
Suddenly (adverb)	the bell (subject)	rang (verb)

3.1.3 Improving the simple sentence with modifiers

The modifier was defined in Section 1 Mechanics. Here, it is used to represent a word or word group that describes, limits, or qualifiers another word or word group and is often useful to improve monotonous sounding simple sentences. So instead of writing:

> ➢ The stag leapt.
>
> ➢ He was startled.
>
> ➢ He leapt suddenly.
>
> ➢ He leapt from a rock.
>
> ➢ The rock was high.

The choppy pieces above can be arranged in one simple sentence, putting each piece where it belongs:

> ➢ The startled stag leapt suddenly from a high rock.

With proper use of modifiers, the sentence can be made vivid, specific, emphatic and lively.

> ➢ Startled and terrified, the stag leapt suddenly from a high rock, bounding and crashing through the dense green woods.

3.1.3.1   Proper use of adjectives

Adjectives are often used as modifiers to describe what kind, number and which ones. However, overuse of nouns as adjectives makes a sentence confusing:

> ➢ The *fund drive completion target date* postponement gave the finance committee *extension* time to gather *area business* contributions.

In this sentence, too many nouns are lined up, and the reader is left to figure out how they relate to one another. To clarify the statement, turn some of the nouns into ordinary adjectives, and use prepositional phrases:

> ➤ Postponement of the final date of the fund drive gave the finance committee more time to gather contributions from local businesses.

3.1.3.2 Proper use of infinitives in the simple sentence

In Section 1 Mechanics, we covered the use of infinitives in sentences. By placing *to* before the bare form of the verb, the infinite and infinitive phrases can be used to modify various parts of the sentence.

> ➤ My favorite time *to run* is early in the morning
>
> ➤ Determined *to succeed*, she redoubled her efforts.
>
> ➤ To write grammatically, you must know something about sentence structure
>
> ➤ On August 27, 1966, Sir Francis Chichester set out to sail a fifty-three-foot boat single-handedly around the world

Using infinitives with *have* and *have been* identify an action or condition completed before another one:

> ➤ Sandra was glad *to have slept* a full eight hours the night before. But she was annoyed *to have been told* nothing of this work earlier.

3.1.3.3 Avoiding or allowing the split infinitive

When one or more adverbs are wedged between *to* and a verb form, the infinitive is split. Sometimes the split infinitive creates an awkward structure, but sometimes it helps to improve the simple sentence. Because the goal of writing is to make our reader's job as easy as

possible, keeping logical units of thought intact generally promotes that effort. To split an infinitive is to put a word or words between the infinitive marker--the word *to*--and the root verb that follows it, as in "to boldly go" in the famous Star Trek phrase "to boldly go where no man has gone before." Here, the infinitive *to go* is being split by the adverb *boldly*.

Most writers would agree that the following sentences containing split infinitives are awkward--or at least not as readable and clear as the "improved" sentences that follow (the infinitives are underlined):

> ➢ She agreed <u>to</u> quickly and quietly <u>leave</u> the room.

> ➢ She agreed <u>to leave</u> the room quickly and quietly.

> ➢ We should try <u>to</u> whenever possible <u>avoid</u> splitting infinitives.

> ➢ We should try <u>to avoid</u> splitting infinitives whenever possible.

In other cases, however, moving a modifier to a position outside of an infinitive result in a sentence that is either less clear or more awkward than it was when the infinitive was split. Consider, for example, these sentences (both the infinitives and the adverbs are underlined):

> ➢ The multiple-choice items on the test were determined <u>to adequately assess</u> content-area knowledge.

> ➢ The multiple-choice items on the test were determined <u>to assess adequately</u> content-area knowledge.

> ➢ The multiple-choice items on the test were determined <u>adequately to assess</u> content-area knowledge. [We cannot tell if *adequately* modifies *determined* here or *assess*.]

> ➢ The multiple-choice items on the test were determined <u>to assess</u> content-area knowledge <u>adequately</u>. [This option is acceptable, although the adverb is not as close to the infinitive as we might prefer.]

> ➢ Even in the twenty-first century, human beings are unable <u>to fully comprehend</u> the vastness and complexity of the universe.

> ➢ Even in the twenty-first century, human beings are unable <u>fully to comprehend</u> the vastness and complexity of the universe. [This construction is just plain awkward.]

> ➢ Even in the twenty-first century, human beings are unable <u>to comprehend</u> the vastness and complexity of the universe <u>fully</u>. [Here the modifier *fully* is very far removed from the word it modifies, *comprehend*.]

In many cases, we do not have to contort a sentence just to avoid splitting an infinitive with an adverb. One editor at the highly respected University of Chicago Press, publisher of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, has summed up the matter well: "euphony or emphasis or clarity or all three can be improved by splitting the infinitive in certain situations"

3.1.3.4   Using Absolute Phrases as Modifiers

An absolute phrase combines a noun and a participle with any accompanying modifiers or objects. The pattern looks like this:

Noun + Participle + Optional Modifier(s) and/or Object(s)

Here are some examples:

> ➢ Legs quivering

Legs = noun; quivering = participle.

> ➤ Her arms folded across her chest

Arms = noun; folded = participle; her, across her chest = modifiers.

> ➤ Our fingers scraping the leftover frosting off the plates

Fingers = noun; scraping = participle; frosting = direct object; our, the, leftover, off the plates = modifiers.

Rather than modifying a specific word, an absolute phrase can describe the whole clause:

> ➤ *Legs quivering*, our old dog Gizmo dreamed of chasing squirrels.
>
> ➤ *Her arms folded across her chest*, Professor Hill warned the class about the penalties of plagiarism.
>
> ➤ We devoured Aunt Lenora's carrot cake, *our fingers scraping the leftover frosting off the plates*.

The participle may sometimes be omitted:

> ➤ *Head down*, the bull charged straight as the matador. [Head held down]
>
> ➤ *Nose in the air*, she walked right past me. [Nose held in the air]

3.1.3.5 Proper placement of modifiers

An important but difficult skill to master in writing an effective sentence is arranging its parts. It's common to place the adjective before the noun it modifies. But modifying phrases requires thought and planning. Often, you will not be able to decide where to put a particular modifier until after you have written out the whole sentence in which it appears. It is best not to worry

about where to place the modifiers. Start with the base sentence and put the modifiers at the end, using one modifier to lead you to another. Watch how this base sentence grows:

> Mary traveled.

Where from?

> Mary traveled from Denver.

Where to?

> Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco.

How?

> Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco by hitchhiking.

Did she hitchhike all the way?

> Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco by hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City.

You can now think about how to place the modifiers. Bracket the words you want to move and use an arrow to show where they are to go.

> By hitchhiking to the house of a friend in Salt Lake City, Mary traveled from Denver to San Francisco.

The earlier example states a simple point and develops it, while this last example creates more suspense by placing the modifiers first. In that position you are signaling that the main point is coming at the end, where it gets special emphasis. Placing a modifier well means connecting the modifier to its headword—the word or phrase it modifiers. If the modifier doesn't clearly point to its headword, the modifier is *misplaced*; if the headword is missing from the sentence, the modifier *dangles*.

3.1.3.6 Misplaced modifiers

A misplaced modifier does not point clearly to its headword—the word or phrase it modifiers:

> ➢ I asked her for the time while waiting for the bus to start a conversation.

The sentence seems to say that the bus was ready to start a conversation. To get the meaning straight, put the modifying phrase right before its headword—I.

> ➢ To start a conversation, I asked her for the time while waiting for the bus.

The adverbial phrase "To start a conversation" explains why I asked her for the time. As an adverbial phrase, it can be placed in different places in the sentence.

> ➢ While waiting for the bus, I asked her for the time to start a conversation.

Note that because of the adverbial phrase, this sentence is no longer a simple sentence since it contains an independent clause (I asked her for the time to start a conversation) and a subordinate clause that explains why.

> ➢ The college librarian announced that all fines on overdue books will be doubled yesterday.

The sentence puts the future into yesterday or yesterday into the future (will). Either way, it makes no sense. It can be corrected as follows:

> ➢ The college librarian announced yesterday that all fines on overdue books will be doubled.

3.1.3.7 Squinting Modifiers

A squinting modifier is one placed where it could modify either of two possible headwords:

> ➢ The street vendor she saw on the way to school occasionally sold wild mushrooms.

Did she see the vendor occasionally, or did he sell wild mushrooms occasionally?

> ➢ The street vendor she saw occasionally on her way to school sold wild mushrooms.

Or

> ➢ The street vendor she saw on her way to school sold wild mushrooms occasionally.

3.1.3.8   Misplaced Restrictors

A restrictor is a one-word modifier that limits the meaning of another word or a group of words.

Restrictors include *almost, only, merely, nearly, scarcely, simply, even, exactly, just* and *hardly.*

Usually a restrictor modifies the word or phrase immediately follows it:

> ➢ *Only the Fabulous Fork* serves brunch on Sundays.
>
> ➢ The Fabulous Fork serves *only brunch* on Sundays.
>
> ➢ The Fabulous Fork serves brunch *only on Sundays*.

Each of these sentences means something different because of the placement of the modifier. The first only limits (modifies) Fabulous Fork. The second only limits brunch. The third only limits Sundays. A restrictor placed at the end of the sentence modifies the word or phrase just before it:

> ➢ The Fabulous Fork serves brunch on Sundays only.

If the modifier is carelessly placed, it will confuse the reader.

> ➢ #The Fabulous Fork only serves brunch on Sundays.

Is brunch the only meal it serves on Sundays, or is Sunday the only day which it serves brunch? The meaning becomes plain only when only stands right next to brunch or to Sundays.

3.1.3.9 Dangling Modifiers

A modifier dangles when its headword is missing. Since a modifier always needs a headword, it will attach itself to a false one if the true one is not in the sentence.

> ➤ #After doing my homework, the dog was fed.

And any dog that can do your homework for you certainly deserves its food. Unless the dog is unusually clever, this sentence contains a dangling modifier (After doing my homework is an adverbial phrase that needs to explain something – the one that fed the dog is missing). You can eliminate the dangling modifier by saying who actually did the homework.

> ➤ #After I did my homework, the dog was fed.

But this version still doesn't tell us who fed the dog. It fails to do so because "The dog was fed" is in the passive voice and does not mention the agent:

> ➤ The dog was fed my me.
>
> ➤ I fed the dog
>
> ➤ After I did my homework, I fed the dog.

Or you can drop the first I and change did to doing:

> ➤ After doing my homework, I fed the dog.

Here's a another example.

> ➤ #Based on the gradual decline in College Board scores over the past twenty years, American high school education is less effective than it used to be.

There is a mis-combination of two sentence:

> ➤ American high school education is less effective than it used to be. This conclusion is based on the gradual decline of College Board scores over the past twenty years.

The introductory adverbial phrase is dangling because it is missing what it's supposed to modify. To combine the two sentences, we can use *shows that, indicates that*, or *leads to the conclusion that.*

> ➢ The gradual decline of College Board scores over the past twenty years indicates that American high school education is less effective than it used to be.

3.2 Problems with the simple sentence

As the examples above show, even simple sentences can be incorrectly structured causing confusion and poor writing. Always check that the subject fits the predicate, and the verb fits the object.

3.2.1 Mixed construction

A mixed construction is a combination of word groups that do not fit together grammatically or meaningfully:

> #Fearful of the dark kept the boy awake all night.

The modifier "fearful" is misused as a subject in the sentence. It is not incorrect to say "Fearful kept the boy awake all night." To fix this problem, we can either turn the modifier into a noun (to be the subject) or furnish a noun as the subject.

> ➢ Fear of the dark kept the boy awake all night.
>
> ➢ Fearful of the dark, the boy lay awake all night.

Sometimes the verb does not fit the object.

> ➢ The head of the shipbuilding company congratulated the achievement of the workers.

An achievement (object) cannot be congratulated; only people can be. To correct the error, change the verb or the object so that the two fit together.

- ➤ #The head of the shipbuilding company congratulated the workers on their achievement.

- ➤ The head of the shipbuilding company praised the achievement of the workers.

3.2.2 Faulty Predication

When a linking verb is used between two words that are not equivalent or compatible, the sentence demonstrates faulty predication. For example:

- ➤ #Another kind of flying is a glider

This sentence uses the subject "Another kind of flying" which refers to a type of flight or an activity; however, the predicate "is a glider" refers to a type of flying machine or an object. An activity is not an object. To correct the sentence, make the verb link two activities of two objects.

- ➤ Another type of flying is gliding (two activities)

- ➤ Another type of aircraft is a glider (two nouns)

- ➤ #According to the senator, his greatest achievement was when he persuaded the president not to seek reelection

The phrase "when he persuaded the president not to seek reelection" is supposed to be an adjective phrase for achievement. But an achievement is not a time, a *when*. It is an act.

- ➤ According to the senator, his greatest achievement was persuading the president not to seek reelection. (two acts)

- ➤ #The purpose of the book persuades readers to get involved in community service.

In the sentence above, the subject is "purpose." However, the purpose itself cannot "persuade," as the verb in this sentence states. In other words, a purpose is not capable of the perceptive act of persuading. This faulty predication can be easily revised so that the subject and verb are relevant to each other:

➢ The author of the book persuades readers to get involved in community service.

In the revised sentence, the subject is "author," and the verb is "persuades." An author can certainly attempt to persuade his or her readers.

Also among faulty predication errors are those involving the use of **is where** and **is when**. Here are some examples of these phrases used incorrectly:

➢ #A vacation is where people get away from school and/or work to relax.

➢ #A simile is when a comparison includes the words "like" or "as."

The first example contains a faulty use of is where. Vacation is not technically a specific place. The second example illustrates incorrect use of is when. A simile is not a time. Like other types of faulty predication, these errors can be corrected painlessly:

➢ A vacation is a break people take to get away from school and/or work.

➢ A simile is a comparison that includes the words "like" or "as."

Another member of the bothersome faulty predication family is the erroneous use of **the reason is because**, which deserves its own section below

3.2.2.1 Use of "The reason"

The faulty structure in this next example, especially in the use of the phrase "the reason" is often found in casual writing but creeps into formal papers too. It sounds valid, but it is still faulty predication.

> ➤ #The reason for the evacuation of the building was because a bomb threat had been made.

This sentence equates reason with because. Those two words are related but not equivalent. Reason is a noun, and because is not. This faulty predication can be corrected by matching the noun reason with a noun equivalent using the coordinating conjunction *that*, "that a bomb threat."

> ➤ The reason for the evacuation of the building was that a bomb threat had been made
>
> ➤ The building was evacuated because a bomb threat had been made (eliminating "the reason" completely makes the sentence simpler and easier to read)

Using "the reason" with "because" also creates an awkward sentence in the example below because the "reason" and "is because" essentially mean the same thing—both phrases describe the cause. It's redundant (and clunky) to use "the reason is because" -- consequently also "the reason why ... is because..." since the word "because" already means "for the reason that." That's why it's redundant.

> ➤ The reason we're late is that there was a traffic accident. (Correct)
>
> ➤ #The reason we're late is because there was a traffic accident. (Incorrect)
>
> ➤ The reason the team lost the game is because they were missing their key players.

 The reason is because is also incorrect because the subject "reason" is a noun, and the verb "is" requires another noun or an adjective in order to complete the predicate (the part of the sentence that discusses the subject). The "is" in both sentences above is a linking verb -- it either describes the subject (an adjective) or renames it (a noun, pronoun or something acting as a noun). Basically, "reason" needs a subject complement. Here's where the additional noun or the adjective can come into play.

The reason is _____. (Insert a noun or adjective here.)

- ➢ #The reason is a lack of talented players. ("Lack of talented players" is a noun phrase).

- ➢ The reason is obvious. ("Obvious" is an adjective.)

"Because" is a conjunction, not a noun or an adjective; therefore, it cannot be the subject complement that "is" requires.

Fortunately, this problem, like the preceding ones, can be fixed quite easily:

- ➢ The reason the team lost the game is that they were missing their key players.

Or

- ➢ The team lost the game because they were missing their key players (eliminating "the reason")

As seen in the sentences above, there is more than one way to eliminate the unnecessary repetition found in the reason is because. Note that most other types of faulty predication can also be remedied in more than one way—there is no one correct solution for these issues.

Another way of remedying the problem is by following the word "reason" with "why," "that," "for" or an infinitive. All of the below are grammatically correct then:-

The reason we left early...

The reason why we left early...

The reason that we left early...

The reason for leaving early...

The reason to leave early...

At the most basic level of explanation, the "why" serves to emphasize "reason"

- ➢ The reason why the brakes failed is unknown.

Or

> ➤ The heavy rain was the reason why the game was called off.

3.3 Sentence Fragments and Incomplete Sentences

A sentence fragment is a word group that pretends to be a sentence. Sentence fragments are easy to recognize when they appear out of context, like these:

> ➤ #When the cat leaped onto the table.
>
> ➤ #Running for the bus.
>
> ➤ #And immediately popped their flares and life vests.

To test if there is a fragment, ask the following questions: (1) Is there a verb? If there is no verb, it is a fragment. (2) Is there a subject? If there is no subject, it is a fragment. (3) Is the sentence merely a subordinate clause, e.g., if it starts with "when"? If so, it is a fragment.

When fragments appear next to related sentences, however, they are harder to spot.

> ➤ #We had just sat down to dinner. When the cat leaped onto the table.
>
> ➤ #I tripped and twisted my ankle. Running for the bus.
>
> ➤ #The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship. And immediately popped their flares and life vests.

3.3.1 Repairing sentence fragments

You can repair most fragments in one of two ways:

1. Pull the fragment into a nearby sentence.

2. Rewrite the fragment as a complete sentence.

> ➤ We had just sat down to dinner when the cat leaped onto the table.

> ➤ Running for the bus, I tripped and twisted my ankle.
>
> ➤ The pilots ejected from the burning plane, landing in the water not far from the ship.
>
>   They immediately popped their flares and life vests.

The next few sections explain different ways of how joining clauses can fix sentence fragments.

3.4 Joining clauses

When several subject-predicate groups combine, they need to be distinguished from the sentence as a whole. They are called clauses.

> ➤ My brother proposed to Elvira;   however,   she dislikes him.
>
> ➤ My brother proposed to Elvira;   though   she dislikes him.

Independent clauses are self-sufficient enough to stand by themselves, to be punctuated as complete sentences. They are still considered independent when they are joined to another independent clause by coordinating conjunctions such as *and, but* and *for,* or adverbial conjunctions such as *however, therefore, moreover, nevertheless, besides.* A complete sentence contains at least one independent clause. Dependent clauses are subordinated to the main clause by a subordinating conjunction or by a relative pronoun. Subordinating conjunctions are words like *if, when, because, though,* and *whereas.* Relative pronouns are *who, which, though,* and *that.* Dependent clauses are considered modifiers. Subordinating conjunctions usually serve as adverbial functions and relative pronouns serve as adjective functions. The following sections elaborate on how clauses are joined.

3.5   The Compound Sentence and Coordination: Working with the Single Thought

The compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses. An independent clause contains a subject and finite verb. Most have only two or three independent clauses joined by coordination or parataxis. Proper coordination means giving the clauses the same rank and role by making them grammatically alike. In a compound sentence the clauses are linked by coordinative conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, yet,* or the correlative *either . . . or, neither . . . nor, not only . . . but (also), both . . . and.* They can also be joined by semicolons, or conjunctive adverbs.

> ➢   The car had broken down, and the driver had pushed it to the side of the road.

Parataxis means that the clauses are simply pushed together without a conjunction, marked by a semicolon, or less commonly by a comma or colon:

> ➢   The car had broken down; the driver had pushed it to the side of the road.

The famous quote by Caesar is a classic example of parataxis: "Veni, vidi, vici" or, "I came, I saw, I conquered."

3.5.1 Compounding with conjunctions

Conjunctions include the set of words commonly known as boysfan: *but, or, yet, so, for, and,* and *nor.* Why would you choose to compound sentences? Short simple sentences may sometimes sound clunky and tedious. Compounding can be applied to if the following relations apply:

3.5.1.1   Simple Addition

> ➢   The economist considered budget cuts, and the politicians thought of votes.

3.5.1.2 Addition of a negative point

➢ Many of the settlers had never farmed before, nor were they ready for the brutal

Saskatchewan winters.

3.5.1.3 Contrast

➢ The delegates came to discuss world trade, but the protestors wanted to stop them.

➢ All the candidates claim to understand Europeans, yet none has ever lived in Europe.

3.5.1.4 Logical consequence

➢ My father never attended the military parades in the city, for he hated war.

➢ During World War II, Americans of Japanese descent were unjustly suspected of

disloyalty, so they were placed in detention camps.

For introduces a reason; so introduces a consequence.

3.5.1.5 Choice

➢ Nelson could keep his ships near England, or he could order them to attack the French in

Egypt.

A conjunction used between independent clauses normally needs a comma just before it, as

shown in the examples above. But there are two exceptions (1) you can omit the comma when

the clauses are short

➢ Many are called but few are chosen.

(2) You can replace a comma with a semicolon when there are commas elsewhere in the

sentence:

> ➤ On the morning of June 28, 1969, the weather finally cleared; but the climbers, wearied by their efforts of the previous day, could not attempt the summit.

You can use a comma without a conjunction when there are more than two clauses, but you should normally use a conjunction between the last two:

> ➤ The sun shone, a stiff breeze ruffled the bay, the sails bellied out, and the bow cut the water like a knife.

3.5.1.6   Avoid overusing *and*

Use and sparingly in compound sentences. A series of clauses strung together by *and* can become boring:

> ➤ I was born in Illinois, and the first big city I ever saw was Chicago, and was I ever excited! I went there with my father and mother, and we stayed in a big hotel in the Loop, and I saw lots of interesting sights.

To break the monotony of compounding with and, substitute other linking words—or other constructions:

> ➤ Since I was born in Illinois, the first big city I ever saw was Chicago. Was I ever excited! My father and mother took me to a big hotel in the Loop.

3.5.2 Compounding with the semicolon

As noted in Section 3 Punctuation, if the independent clauses are closely related and the relation is clear without a conjunction, they may be linked with a semicolon instead. Semicolons help you connect closely related ideas when a point stronger than a comma is needed. By using semicolons effectively, you can make your writing sound more sophisticated. Skilled writers know that they should not overuse the semicolon but merely use for "spicing up" the text's punctuation, as explained in the following sections.

> In film, a low-angle shot makes the subject look powerful; a high-angle shot does just the opposite.

> Some books are undeservedly forgotten; none are undeservedly remembered

> Too much perhaps, has been said of his silence; too much stress has been laid upon his reserve.

3.5.3 Compounding with conjunctive adverbs

Just like coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs also join two or more clauses and show their relationship. But a conjunctive adverb is usually weightier and more emphatic than a conjunction. These conjunctive adverbs are often found in research papers because the authors wish to reinforce their points, compare or contrast their research with others or show cause and effect. Because they are adverbs they qualify a verb, adjective or another adverb, answering the questions: When? Where? How? Why? To what degree? A semicolon is placed before it, followed by a comma after:

> The Iron Duke had complete confidence in his soldiers' training and valor; furthermore, he considered his battle plan a work of genius. (qualifying how complete his confidence was)

Conjunctive adverbs indicate the following relations between one clause and another:

3.5.3.1 Addition with emphasis (besides, furthermore, moreover, in addition)

> Some economists oppose legislation restricting foreign trade; in addition, they attack proposals to increase corporate taxes. (qualifying the degree they oppose)

3.5.3.2 Likeness with emphasis (likewise, similarly, in the same way)

➤ Many young Englishmen condemned the English war against France in the 1790s; likewise, many young Americans condemned the American war against North Vietnam in the 1960s.

3.5.3.3 Contrast with emphasis (however, nevertheless, still, nonetheless, conversely, otherwise, instead, in contrast, on the other hand)

➤ Einstein's theory of relativity was largely the product of speculation; experiments made within the past fifty years, however, have confirmed may of its basic points.

Notice how in this example, the conjunctive adverb *however* is not placed directly after the semicolon.

3.5.3.4 Cause and Effect (accordingly, consequently, hence, therefore, as a result, for this reason)

➤ Chamberlain made an ill-considered peace treaty with Hitler after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia; as a result, England was unprepared for the German invasion of Poland.

3.5.3.5 A means-and-ends relation (thus, thereby, by this means, in this manner)

➤ Florence nightingale organized a unit of thirty-eight nurses for the Crimean War in the 1850s; thus she became a legend

3.5.3.6 Reinforcement (for example, for instance, such as, in fact, in particular, indeed)

These adverbial phrases are often used in research because the goal of research is to reinforce or emphasize the argument. Good writers explain their ideas well. One way they explain their ideas is to include examples which make the writer's thoughts much more concrete, practical,

and comprehensible to the reader. Without good examples, the reader is left with just theories that are too difficult to use and apply.

> Public transportation will also be vastly improved; a high-speed train, for instance, will take passengers from Montreal to Toronto in less than two hours.

3.5.3.7   Time (meanwhile, then, subsequently, afterward, earlier, later)

> At first, members of the audience were overtly hostile to the speaker; later, they cheered her as one of their own.

3.5.4 Usage of therefore, so, hence, thus

3.5.4.1   Therefore

According to the dictionary therefore means *in consequence of that; for that reason; as a result; consequently.* It is used in a logical cause and effect sense.

> I think, therefore I am. (for that reason)

> She was early and therefore had to wait out in the cold. (In consequence of)

> He studied a lot, therefore making it easier for him to pass the test. (as a result)

> I win, therefore you lose. (consequently)

> He has a race tomorrow; therefore, he can't stay out late tonight. (for that reason)

Replacing *therefore* with *so* in the following examples may not fit the meaning of the sentence

> She was early and so had to wait in the cold (*so* can be used since it means with the results that as well to mean as a result)

> I win so you lose (*so* should not be used to mean consequence)

3.5.4.2 So

According to the dictionary, the conjunction *so* means *in order that; with the results that; on the condition that.* So is often coupled with *that* to indicate reason and explanation.

> ➢ Check carefully, so any mistakes can be caught. (in order that)
>
> ➢ He checked carefully so that any mistakes were caught. (in order that)
>
> ➢ It was a long journey, so I'm really tired now. (with the results that)
>
> ➢ You are right, of course, so I think we will accept what the bank offers. (on the condition that)
>
> ➢ *They both went on a diet **so that** they could play more football with their friends.* (reason and explanation)

It would not be correct to say:

> ➢ INCORRECT: #Check carefully, therefore any mistakes can be caught (therefore should not be used to indicate *in order that*)

This is incorrect because catching any mistakes is not the consequence necessarily of checking (necessary but not sufficient)

3.5.4.3 Hence

According to the dictionary, hence means (1) an inference to this fact, (2) for that reason, (3) from this source, (4) from now, (5) from that time, and (6) from this place. Because hence is used to mean *for that reason*, it is close to therefore but its other connotations make it more suited to indicate future consequences.

> ➢ The eggs were very fresh and hence satisfactory (inference, for that reason)

- The eggs were very fresh and thus satisfactory (is not an inference, but indicates a more emphatic consequence)

- They will leave a month hence (from that time)

- It's that India has an airline that is run by politicians and hence can be milked by various interest groups. (inference, for that reason)

- India had this airline that was run by politicians and thus was milked by various interest groups (accordingly, consequently in the past)

- INCORRECT #I think, hence I am (therefore is more suitable here because the necessary consequence of thinking is existence. Existence is not inferred)

3.5.4.4 Thus

According to the dictionary thus means (1) in the way just indicated; in this way; (2) in such or the following manner; so; (3) accordingly; consequence with emphasis: (4) to this extent or degree; (5) as an example; for instance. It is close to hence, but is more suited to indicate what has happened in the past.

- Stated thus, the problem seems trivial (in the way indicated)

- Thus it came to pass. (in the following manner)

- It is late, and thus you must go. (consequently)

- thus far. (to the extent or degree)

- The professor described it thus … (as an example, an instance)

- It is late, therefore you must go (therefore can replace thus to mean consequence. Thus is used to provide more emphasis)

3.5.4.5 Usage of for example, for instance, such as, in fact and other interrupters

The writer should provide examples to make the point more practical or concrete. However, good writers use them judiciously. In academic writing, the use of in fact is often frowned on because the author risk making a wrong claim.

This passage requires examples to explain what kinds of things a student can do

> ➢ It is apparent that when a person desires to learn a second language, he must study and use that language outside of the formal classroom setting. If he does not use his new mode of communication, he will never truly progress to a proficient level. He must seek as many opportunities as possible to employ that new language in "real" situations. There are many things a student can do to supplement his learning and second language acquisition.

There are several adverbial phrases, for example, for instance, such as, e.g., that are commonly used. These phrases are often used incorrectly. These phrases essentially have the same meaning, but they are not used in the same way. For our purposes, let's break them up into 2 groups: phrases used within a sentence and phrases used to begin a new sentence.

Group 1: Phrases Used Within a Sentence

Each phrase can be used within a sentence when it is followed by a list of items which elaborate on or show examples for the main idea of the sentence. Here are examples:

> ➢ I can play quite a few musical instruments, for example, the flute, the guitar, and the piano.

> ➤ I can play quite a few musical instruments, for instance, the flute, the guitar, and the piano.

> ➤ I can play quite a few musical instruments, e.g., the flute, the guitar, and the piano.

> ➤ I can play quite a few musical instruments, such as the flute, the guitar, and the piano.

Look at the last sentence with such as. Do you see anything different with this sentence as compared to the first three? Such as does NOT have a comma after it; the first three phrases have commas before and after them.

The phrase such as can be used in the middle of a sentence without any commas. Take a look at this example:

> ➤ Car companies such as Toyota and Ford manufacture their automobiles in many different countries around the world.

You may be wondering why there are no commas. The answer is simple: the words after such as are necessary and essential to the meaning of the sentence. If you take out those words, the meaning will change. Let's take out such as:

> ➤ Car companies manufacture their automobiles in many different countries around the world.

What does this sentence mean? It could mean ALL car companies manufacture their automobiles in many different countries around the world. This is not true because some companies produce their cars in just one or two countries. Therefore, the phrase such as Toyota and Ford is necessary. If these words are necessary, do not use commas.

Group 2: Phrases Used to Begin a New Sentence

Usually only *for example* and *for instance* can begin new sentences. Each can begin a new sentence when the phrase is followed by a complete idea or sentence (not a list of items).

➢ My father loves going to restaurants which serve exotic foods. *For example*, last week he went to a restaurant which serves deep-fried rattlesnake.

➢ My father loves going to restaurants which serve exotic foods. *For instance*, last week he went to a restaurant which serves deep-fried rattlesnake.

To improve the earlier passage, we can write:

➢ It is apparent that when a person desires to learn a second language, he must study and use that language outside of the formal classroom setting. If he does not use his new mode of communication, he will never truly progress to a proficient level. He must seek as many opportunities as possible to employ that new language in "real" situations. There are many things a student can do to supplement his learning and second language acquisition. *For example*, students can attend churches where the target language is spoken. They can make many friends and attend numerous gatherings for free. Through these interactions, students are guaranteed opportunities to learn and practice the new language.

In fact is a discourse marker. We use *in fact* to add more detailed information to what has just been said:

➢ Did she pass her driving test?

➢ Yes, she did; *in fact*, she's now taking an advanced driving test.

In fact is commonly used in front position in a clause, although in informal situations, it may occur in end position:

> ➤ The holiday was really disappointing – a complete disaster, *in fact*. It just rained all the time.

In fact is by far the more common idiom. It is phrase that is used to emphasize a particular truth, especially if it is contrary to what would commonly be understood. A good synonym is *actually*

Other discourse markers which have similar meanings include: *in actual fact, as a matter of fact, in point of fact, actually, in truth*.

Indeed is used when you are reinforcing your previous statement and eventually adding certainty to it with actual example:

> ➤ He likes to have things his own way; *indeed*, he can be very stubborn. (reinforcing the previous statement)
>
> ➤ Many people objected. *Indeed*, my uncle complained in writing. (reinforcing the previous statement)

Actually and *in fact* can be used to make things clearer or more precise, or to introduce unexpected information.

> ➤ I have got a new job. *Actually [In fact]*, they have just appointed me as their area sales manager.
>
> ➤ The lecture was so boring that I *actually [in fact]* fell asleep before the speaker had finished.

An interrupter interrupts the flow of a sentence, and can be in the form of a single word, a phrase, or a clause. Interrupters are used for emphasis, to indicate a switch in tone, to qualify a subject, or as a side note. Interrupters are usually punctuated with commas or em dashes on both sides of the word, phrase, or clause. Here are a few examples of interrupters punctuated with commas:

- ➤ **For emphasis**: My sister, *to be honest*, did not do her research.

- ➤ **To indicate a switch in tone**: The puppy wanted to play with string. The kitten, *however*, had a different plan in mind.

- ➤ **To qualify a subject**: Some pop stars, Katy Perry *for example*, will end up on reality televisions shows.

- ➤ **As a side note:** The iPhone 5, *surprisingly*, was not released before my birthday.

3.5.5 The Missing Conjunction or Semicolon—The Comma Splice

The comma splice is the error of joining two independent clauses—two possible sentences—with nothing but a comma:

- ➤ One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion, she collapsed two miles from the finish.

Commas are used with modifiers such as after an introductory phrase, before nonessential or parenthetical information, adjective phrases, or appositives, to name a few. If the clause is independent, or distinct there may be a danger of a comma splice. You are probably trying to keep two related points together in one sentence. Since the thought is still single, it should be coordinated. The comma alone cannot do that for you. You should therefore do one of four things:

3.5.5.1   Put a conjunction after the comma

- ➤ One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion, so she collapsed two miles from the finish.

3.5.5.2 Replace the comma with a semicolon.

> One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion; she collapsed two miles from the finish.

3.5.5.3 Replace the comma with a semicolon and conjunctive adverb

> One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion; as a result, she collapsed two miles from the finish.

3.5.5.4 Replace the comma with a period, making two sentences.

> One of the runners suffered from heat exhaustion. She collapsed two miles from the finish.

Sometimes a comma splice occurs when the second clause in a sentence begins with a conjunctive adverb:

> Most working people get at least one raise a year, nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.

A conjunctive adverb used between two clauses must be preceded by a semicolon:

> Most working people get at least one raise a year; nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.

Alternatively, you can use a period, making two sentences.

> Most working people get at least one raise a year. Nevertheless, inflation often leaves them with no increase in buying power.

3.5.6 Missing Conjunction—Run-On Sentences

A run-on sentence (sometimes called the fused sentence) is a sentence that contains two independent clauses with no punctuation or conjunction between them. The structure disturbs the flow of meaning and like the name, it reads like two sentences running together or running over each other. It is similar to the comma splice without the comma; in fact, a comma splice is often called a type of run-sentence.

> ➤ Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

In this example, the first independent clause simply pushes into the second one. We cannot tell for sure where the first one ends. Is its last work *sea*, or *cove*? As the example shows, another problem with the sentence is that the meaning becomes confused. Usually, run-on sentences are punctuation errors caused by your thoughts running faster than your hand. To correct a run-on sentence, you can either:

3.5.6.1   Use a comma and a conjunction between the clauses

> ➤ Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove, and she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

3.5.6.2   Use a semicolon between the clauses

> ➤ Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove; she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

3.5.6.3   Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb between the clauses

> ➤ Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove; then she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

3.5.6.4 Use a period at the end of the first clause. You will then have two sentences.

> ➢ Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove. She watched the gulls sailing overhead.

Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

> ➢ After Emily listened to the lobster boats chugging out to sea from the cove, she watched the gulls sailing overhead.

3.6 Complex Sentences: Working with More than One Thought using Subordination

Subordination lets you show the relative importance of the parts of the sentence. It combines at least two different thoughts or ideas. Suppose you want to describe what a dog did on a particular night, and you want your description to include the following points:

1. The dog lived next door.

2. The dog was scrawny.

3. The dog barked.

4. The dog was old

5. The dog howled.

6. The dog kept me awake.

7. I was awake all night.

Notice that individually, each of these sentences is a thought on its own, or a concept on its own. The best way to arrange these isolated facts in a sentence is to coordinate facts that are equally important.

> ➤ The dog was scrawny and old, and he lived next door; he barked and howled and kept me awake all night.

This sentence coordinates all the facts and make them all important but does not show which one(s) are most important to you. Depending on what you are writing about, any one of them can be the most important. If you're writing about yourself, then, the most important fact about the dog is that it kept you awake all night. To highlight this fact, you could rewrite the sentence like this:

> ➤ The scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night by barking and howling.

The sentence emphasizes just one statement: the dog kept me awake. By turning all the other statements into modifiers of dog or kept me awake, it subordinates them to the point that is most important to you. You can stress the point even more by placing it at the end of the sentence—the stress position:

> ➤ By barking and howling, the scrawny old dog next door kept me awake all night.

Alternatively, you could subordinate all the other facts about the dog to the fact that it lived next door:

> ➤ The dog *that kept me awake all night with its barking and howling* lived next door.

The entire group of italicized words modifies dog. So all the other facts about the dog are now subordinated to the fact that it lived next door.

Finally, suppose you want to subordinate all of these facts about the dog to a brand-new fact. Suppose you want to tell what happened to you as a result of the sleepless night. Then you might write a sentence like this:

> ➤ Because the barking and howling of the scrawny old dog next door had kept me awake all night, I fell asleep in the middle of the chemistry final.

This kind of writing demonstrates different ways of using the subordinate clause to emphasize different aspects of the sentence. The subordinate clause makes the reader want more information to finish the thought or idea.

Other examples:

When the car broke down,   the driver pushed it off the road

Sub. Adverbial clause   **Main clause**

Sarah told everyone   that she would go

Main clause   **sub noun clause, direct obj. of "told"**

Mike lent his bike to the boy   who lived next door

Main clause   **sub. Adj. clause modifying "boy"**

3.7 Subordinate Clause

A subordinate clause, also called a dependent clause, is a group of words that has its own subject and predicate but cannot stand alone as a simple sentence (this sentence has one: "also called a dependent clause"). It must be included in, or connected to an independent clause—one that can stand by itself as a sentence:

> ➤ *Before she spoke to reporters*, she conferred with her advisors.

The clause in italics is the subordinate clause since it has a subject *she*, and predicate *spoke to reporters*, but because it has the word *Before* at the beginning, it cannot stand on its own. It needs an explanation: So what happened before she spoke?

> Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a disease *that takes thousands of lives each year*.

The subordinate clause in italics has a subject *that*, and predicate, but it doesn't explain what that is that took thousands of lives.

> Pavarotti was cheered as he finished the beautiful aria in which Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.

This sentence contains two subordinate clauses, *as he finished the beautiful aria,* and *in which Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.* Both cannot stand on their own. What happened *as he finished the beautiful aria?* When did *Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.* Each question is answered using the independent clause with the help of a punctuation (a comma as in the first example), a relative pronoun (*that* as in the second example) or some other word.

These sentences that contain an independent clause and at least one subordinate clause is called a complex sentence because they combine a principal idea and an auxiliary or supplementary idea. The auxiliary idea aids the principal idea and therefore dependent on it.

Principal idea: Pavarotti was cheered

When was he cheered? As he finished the beautiful aria

What was the aria about? Rodolfo declares his love to Mimi.

3.7.1 Subordinate Ideas of Lesser Importance

Don't subordinate the main clause.

> #The first two or three weeks of college are the hardest. Some students do not feel the difficulty. But during these weeks everything seems strange—the professors, the lecturers, the textbooks, even your classmates.

The second sentence does not support the topic sentence. The sentence says that some students do not experience the difficulty and this misleads the reader. As a qualifier, it should be subordinated.

> ➢ Edited: Although some students do not feel the difficulty, the first two or more weeks of college are the hardest.

The subordinate clause is the one that starts with *although*.

> ➢ #Most young people still dream of owning their own home, *although for many that dream is becoming increasingly difficult to realize*. The effect of inflation upon the costs of labor and building materials and mortgage means that fewer and fewer people can afford to become home owners.

The main idea is that becoming home owners are becoming difficult. That sentence should not be subordinated.

> ➢ Most young couples still dream of owning their own home. For many, however, that dream is becoming increasingly difficult to realize (Main clause put in a separate sentence)
>
> ➢ Most young couples still dream of owning their own home, but for many that dream is becoming increasingly difficult to realize.
>
> ➢ Although most young couples still dream of owning their own home, that dream is becoming increasingly difficult for many to realize.

Position the subordinate clauses in order of diminishing importance

Independent clauses – dependent clauses – phrases – individual words

The following versions of the same idea illustrate how these different elements act as subordinate elements

> *The settlers began.* They had great hopes. (Same importance)

> *When they began*, the settlers had great hopes. (Dependent clause)

> *At first*, the settlers had great hopes. (Phrase)

> *Initially*, the settlers had great hopes. (Words)

3.7.2 Using Adjective Clauses

A subordinate clause becomes an auxiliary idea by modifying other parts of the sentence. As described in Section 1 Mechanics, adjective clauses function as modifiers of nouns or pronouns and normally begins with a relative pronoun (which, that, who, whom, or whose). The relative pronoun modifies and refers to a noun or noun phrase that is called its antecedent, which usually appears just before the relative pronoun.

> The dog *that* kept me awake all night lived next door.

Principal idea: The dog lived next door

Subordinate clause: kept me awake all night

What kept me awake all night? The dog

An adjective clause can say more about its antecedent than a single adjective does. Compare these two sentences:

> Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a *fatal* disease.

> Medical researchers have long been seeking a cure for a disease that *takes thousands of lives every year.*

See how these two different thoughts are combined by subordinating one to the other using an adjective clause.

> ➢ Idea 1: Amelia Earhart disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip.
>
> ➢ Idea 2: She set new speed records for long distance flying in the 1930s.
>
> ➢ Combination 1: Amelia Earhart, who *set new speed records for long-distance flying in the 1930s*, disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip.

The principal idea is idea 1: Amelia Earhart disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip.

> ➢ Combination 2: Amelia Earhart, who disappeared in 1937 during a round-the-world trip, set new speed records for long distance flying in the 1930s.

The principal idea is idea 2: Amelia Earhart set new speed records for long distance flying in the 1930s.

3.7.2.1 Choosing Relative Pronouns

The relative pronoun depends chiefly on the antecedent.

1. Use *who, whom, whose*, or *that* when the antecedent is one or more persons:

> ➢ Milliard Fillmore, who almost nobody remembers, was president of the United States from 1848 to 1852.
>
> ➢ Never trust a doctor whose office plants have died.
>
> ➢ Pedestrians that ignore traffic lights are living dangerously.

2. Use *which* or *that* when the antecedent is one or more things:

> ➢ A mind that is stretched to a new idea never returns to its original dimensions.

➤ A team of shipwreck hunters recently found the wreck of the S. S. Leopoldville, which was sunk by a German torpedo boat on Christmas Eve 1944.

3. Use *which* when the antecedent is an entire clause—but only when nothing else can be mistaken for the antecedent:

➤ Tim cackled maliciously, which infuriated Paul (which modifies the action of Tim, not just Tim)

➤ The accident could have been avoided, which made it all the harder to bear

4. Do not use *that* when the antecedent is a proper noun, a clearly identified person, or a clearly identified thing (e.g. using which instead of that):

➤ The world's greatest jumpers include Carl Lewis, [that] who has cleared nearly twenty feet.

➤ The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge [that], *which* links Brooklyn to Staten Island, has the longest suspension span in the world.

➤ Passengers on Flight 89 commended the pilot [that], *who* had guided the plane to safety despite the blizzard.

➤ The town's library [that], *which* was built in 1850, holds over one hundred thousand volumes.

5. You may use *whose* with any antecedent to avoid writing *of which*:

➤ The children worked in a schoolroom *whose* windows were never opened. (The antecedent for whose is a thing—schoolroom)

➤ Compare with: The children worked in a schoolroom *of which* the windows were never opened.

> She landed a helicopter whose pilot had collapsed over the controls. (The antecedent for whose is a thing—the helicopter)

6. You may use where or when as a relative pronoun when the antecedent is a place or time:

> That morning we drove to the town of Appomattox Court House, Virginia, *where* Lee surrendered to Grant at the end of the Civil War.

> Her favorite season was spring, *when* the Earth seemed born again.

> She felt a chill as she stood on the very spot *where* the murderer had been hanged. (Because the clause is restrictive, a comma is not placed before the relative pronoun)

3.7.2.2 Placing the Adjective Clause or Phrase

Place the adjective clause so that the reader can clearly see its connection to the antecedent of the relative pronoun. Observe the following guidelines:

1. Whenever possible, place the adjective clause immediately after the antecedent of the relative pronoun:

> Students who *cheat poison* the atmosphere of the college.

> Newhouse made a proposal *that nobody else liked*.

> The police shot a raccoon *that appeared to be rabid*.

2. If an adjective phrase gets between the relative pronoun and its antecedent, you can sometimes turn the phrase into another adjective clause:

> Mothers of small children *who work* must juggle conflicting responsibilities

The antecedent or main clause "mothers of small children must juggle conflicting responsibilities" is split by the adjective clause. The phrase "work" comes between who and the antecedent. To better place the adjective phrase we can create two adjective phrases

➤ Mothers who work and who have small children must juggle conflicting responsibilities.

Alternatively, you can reconstruct the sentence:

➤ Working mothers of small children must juggle conflicting responsibilities. (In this case, there is no relative pronoun)

3. If the adjective clause is long, you can move the antecedent to the end of the main clause:

➤ Leonardo da Vinci, whose knowledge of sculpture, painting, architecture, engineering, and science made him the intellectual wonder of his time, painted the Mona Lisa in Florence about 1504.

➤ Edited: The Mona Lisa was painted in Florence about 1504 by Leonardo da Vinci, whose knowledge of sculpture, painting, architecture, engineering, and science made him the intellectual wonder of his time.

The second version keeps both parts of the main clause together.

3.7.2.3   Punctuating Adjective Clauses

Use commas to set off an adjective clause only when it is nonrestrictive (See Section 2 Punctuation for more details)—that is, not needed to identity the antecedent. A nonrestrictive adjective clause has a well-identified noun as its antecedent:

➤ Linda Watson, who earned a cumulative grade-point average of 3.8, was graduated with highest honors.

The adjective clause is not needed to identify the antecedent because she is identified by name. Compare with this sentence where the clause restricts the meaning to certain members of the group and would therefore require no commas:

> Students who earn a cumulative grade average of 3.7 or more will be graduated with the highest honors.

> Most Canadians who speak French live in the province of Quebec.

Since a restrictive clause is essential to the meaning of the antecedent and of the sentence as a whole, it must not be set off from the antecedent by commas.

3.7.2.4   Overusing Adjective Clauses

Do not use adjective clauses starting with phrases like who is and which are when you don't need them. Cut the excess words:

> Some of the compact cars ~~that are~~ sold by American companies are manufactured in Japan.

> Joseph P. Kennedy, ~~who was the~~ father of President John F. Kennedy, made a fortune in banking and real estate.

3.7.3 Using Adverb Clauses

As introduced in Section 1 Mechanics, the adverb clauses modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, usually answering one of these questions: When? Where? Why? How? Under what conditions? To what degree? They always begin with a subordinating conjunction (such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *that*, *though*, *unless*, or *when*). Normally an adverb clause gives more information than a simple adverb does:

> Adverb: Then I hit the brakes.

> ➢ Adverb clause: As the deer leaped onto the road, I hit the brakes.

An adverb clause can also be used to subordinate one thought to another.

> ➢ *As he was being tackled*, he threw the ball.

This sentence highlights the throwing of the ball and is designed to fit into a paragraph like this:

> ➢ The line wavered, and Keene knew it would break in seconds. But he dropped back, dancing around until he spotted a receiver. *As he was being tackled, he threw the ball.* Polanski made a leaping catch at the twenty-five-yard line, came down running, zigzagged past the Iowa safety, and crossed the goal line. The crowd went wild.

On the other hand, if the most important thing, or the principal idea is not the pass but the tackle, the sentence should emphasize that:

> ➢ Keene looked desperately for a receiver, sensing the seconds ticking away. Suddenly his blocking broke down, and he was surrounded. *As he threw the ball, he was being tackled.* The pass went nearly straight up, then fell to Earth behind him. The game was over.

In each version of the italicized sentence, the adverb clause lets you indicate which of the two thoughts or ideas is more important.

3.7.3.1   Placing Adverb Clauses

Adverb clauses also should follow the principal clause or thought, but most adverb clauses are movable:

> ➢ The colonel ordered an investigation *as soon as* he heard the complaint of the enlisted men.

When did he order an investigation? The adverb clause after as soon as explains when.

I worked in a department for a year so that I could earn money for college.

This kind of structure has a brisk, no-nonsense effect and you will seldom go wrong with it. But it is not always the best order. To create suspense, or to build up to your main point, put the adverb clause at the beginning and save the main clause for the end.

The sentence above can also be written:

> ➤ As soon as he heard the complaint of the enlisted men, the colonel ordered an investigation.

In this sentence, ordering the investigation gets the attention.

Consider the two versions of a sentence spoken by Winston Churchill in1941, when the Germans had occupied most of Europe and were threatening to invade England:

> ➤ We shall not flag or fail even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule.
>
> ➤ Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.

There is nothing grammatically wrong with the first sentence, which starts with a main clause and finishes with a long adverb clause. But this sentence has all the fire of a wet match. Because the crucial words *we shall not flag or fail* come first, they are virtually smothered by what follows them. By the time we reach the end of the sentence, we may even have forgotten its main point. The arrangement of the second sentence—the one Churchill actually wrote—guarantees we will remember it. Precisely because we are made to wait until the end of the sentence for the main clause, it strikes with telling effect.

3.7.3.2 Punctuating Adverb Clauses

Introductory adverb clauses are followed by a comma:

> ➢ *Even though I knocked loudly on the door*, the storekeeper would not open it.

> ➢ *When the gate opened*, the bull charged into the ring.

Ordinarily, an adverb clause coming at the end of the sentence is not preceded by a comma:

> ➢ The bull charged into the ring *when the gate opened*.

> ➢ A wall collapsed because the foundation was poorly constructed

If the adverb clause at the end of a sentence is nonrestrictive—not essential to the meaning of the sentence—a comma may precede it.

> ➢ We planted the trees in the fall of 1984, *just after we bought the house*.

3.7.3.3 Making Adverb Clauses Complete: Avoiding Faulty Comparisons

1. Do not use an incomplete adverb clause when a complete one is needed to make a comparison clear:

> ➢ Faulty: #The river is cleaner now as *two years ago*

The principal thought: The river is cleaner now

Question: Compared to when?

The sentence seems to compare the river with two years

> ➢ Edited: The river is cleaner now as it was two years ago.

> ➢ Edited: The river is as clean now as it was two years ago.

2. Do not skip any word that is essential to a comparison:

> ➢ Faulty: #Roger moves faster than any player on the team.

The principal thought: Roger moves faster

Question: Compared to whom?

If Roger himself is a player on the team, the original sentence seems to compare him with

himself as well as others

> Edited: Roger moves faster than any other player on the team does.

3.7.4 Using Noun Clauses

Noun clauses, introduced in Section 1 Mechanics, can also be used to subordinate. A noun

clause is used as a noun within a sentence. Normally it gives more information than a simple

noun can. This structure is very common in academic writing because articles are always

providing explanations and typically explanations are noun clauses. Compare the following:

> Government officials did not anticipate the problem.

> Government officials did not anticipate that protestors would occupy the presidential

> palace.

In this sentence, the noun clause serves as the object. The noun clause can also serve as the

subject or predicate noun.

3.7.4.1   Noun clause as subject

> *What Sylvia did* amazed me.

Principal thought: Something (noun) amazed me. What? What Sylvia did.

> *Whoever wins the nomination* will be running against a popular incumbent.

Principal thought: Someone will be running against a popular incumbent. Who?

3.7.4.2   Noun clause as object

> I feared *(that) we would never get out alive*. (That is optional)

Principal thought: I feared something. What?

> The police have not discovered *how the prisoner escaped*.

> No one knew *whether or not interest rates would rise*.

> We will plug the leaks *with whatever is handy*.

> Alexandra wondered *what marriage would do to her*.

3.7.4.3   Noun clause as predicate noun

> The main reason for the change is that all in the company will benefit.

> A computer with the brain of a genius is what I need right now.

> The most puzzling mystery of all is why she abdicated at the height of her power.

3.7.5 Poor Subordination

Use subordinate connectives only when the main clause states a major point, with the

dependent clause establishing a relation in place, time or logic.

> The edge of the cape was wet with blood *where* it had swept along the bull's back as he
>
> went by.

Effective subordination:

1. Clarifies relationships in a sentence by joining two disjointed statements. "Kroger organized

   a counterfeiting ring. He had studied printing in Germany".

> Kroger, *who had studied printing in Germany*, organized a counterfeiting ring.

> Avoid upside down subordination when no irony is intended. Careful not to blur emphasis. "I was ten *when* I moved to Alaska" focuses the attention on you and your age. "When I was ten, *we moved to Alaska*" focuses the attention on Alaska.
>
> Upside down: The salary was considered good by local standards, *though* it was not enough to feed and clothe my family.
>
> *Though* considered good by local standards, my salary was not enough to feed and clothe my family.

2. Use modifiers to help a sentence carry added freight instead of using separate clauses.

> Routine: We caught two bass. We hauled them in briskly, as though they were mackerel. After we pulled them over the side of the boat, we stunned them with a blow on the back of the head.
>
> Effective: We caught two bass, *hauling them in briskly* as though they were mackerel, *pulling them over the side of the boat* in a businesslike manner without any landing net, and *stunning them with a blow on the back of the head*.

3. Break up subject and verb

> The horse, *lifted and gored*, crashed over with the bull driving into him.
>
> Manuel, *lying on the ground*, kicked at the bull's muzzle with his slippered feet.

3.7.6 Choosing Subordinating Conjunctions

In Section 1 Mechanics subordinating conjunctions (or subordinators) were introduced as words used in the beginning of dependent or subordinating clause. A long list of these words were provided but no guidance was given as to when they should be applied. These subordinating conjunctions signal a variety of relations:

3.7.6.1   Time

> ➢ The factory closed *when* the owner died.
>
> ➢ *Until* the power was restored, we cooked our meals in the fireplace.
>
> ➢ *While* Marian sang, Zachary played the piano.

3.7.6.2   Causality

Kate was happy because she had just won her first case.

Since I had no money, I walked all the way home.

3.7.6.3   Concession and Contrast

> ➢ Money cannot make you happy, *though* it can keep you comfortable.
>
> ➢ *Though* money cannot make you happy, it can keep you comfortable.
>
> ➢ *Although* the mosquitoes were out in force, we spent an enjoyable hour fishing before sundown.
>
> ➢ In my new car, I am averaging over thirty-five miles per gallon of gas, *whereas* I got only twenty in my old one.
>
> ➢ *While* Finnegan himself never ran for any office, he ran many successful campaigns.

3.7.6.4 Condition

> *If* the battery-powered cars become popular, the price of gas will drop.

> He ran *as if* he had a broken leg.

3.7.6.5 Purpose

> I worked in a department store for a year *so that* I could earn money for college.

3.7.6.6 Place

> *Where* federal funds go, federal regulations go with them.

3.7.6.7 Result

> We are so accustomed to adopting a mask before others *that* we end by being unable to recognize ourselves.

> She fixed the clock *so that* it worked.

3.7.6.8 Range of possibilities

> *Whatever* the president wants, Congress has a will of its own.

You can also signal general possibility with whenever, wherever, whoever, whichever, and however:

> I can't pronounce the name *however* it is spelled.

3.7.6.9 Comparison

> The river is cleaner now *than* it was two years ago.

3.7.7 Relations signaled by subordinating conjunctions (subordinators)

Time	Place
After	**Place**
As	Whence
As long as	Where
As soon as	Wherever
Before	**Purpose**
Ever since	In order that
Until	Lest
When	However
Whenever	Whatever
While	Whichever
Concession and Contrast	Whoever
Although	So that
Even though	**Causality**
Though	Because
Whereas	Since
While	**Result**
Condition	So that

As if	That
As though	**Comparison**
If	Than
Provided that	
Unless	
Range of possibilities	

3.7.8 Choosing between That and Which

3.7.8.1 Restrictive Clause—That

A restrictive clause is just part of a sentence that you can't get rid of because it specifically restricts some other part of the sentence. Here's an example:

> ➢ Gems that sparkle often elicit forgiveness.

The words that sparkle restrict the kind of gems you're talking about. Without them, the meaning of the sentence would change. Without them, you'd be saying that all gems elicit forgiveness, not just the gems that sparkle. (And note that you don't need commas around the words that sparkle.)

3.7.8.2 Nonrestrictive Clause—Which

A nonrestrictive clause is something that can be left off without changing the meaning of the sentence. You can think of a nonrestrictive clause as simply additional information. Here's an example:

> ➢ Diamonds, which are expensive, often elicit forgiveness.

3.7.9 Using Whether or Whether or Not

Whether [or not] they are professional writers, many people are confused about whether [or not] they should use the phrase "or not" after "whether."

The answer is simple. It depends.

In the sentence above, it's yes in the first case and no in the second:

> ➢ Whether or not they are professional writers, many people are confused about whether they should use the phrase "or not" after "whether."

Here's what The Times's stylebook says:

3.7.9.1   Whether

Often *or not* is redundant after *whether*, but not always. The phrase may ordinarily be omitted in these cases:

1. When the *whether* clause is the object of a verb:

> ➢ She wonders *whether* the teacher will attend. (The clause is the object of wonders.)

2. When the clause is the object of a preposition:

> ➢ The teacher will base his decision on whether the car has been repaired. (The clause is the object of on.)

3. When the clause is the subject of the sentence:

> ➢ Whether the car will be ready depends on the mechanic. (The clause is the subject of depends.)

But when a *whether* clause modifies a verb, *or not* is needed:

> ➢ They will play tomorrow whether or not it rains. (The clause modifies play.)

Put more briefly, "whether" can generally stand alone when its clause is functioning as a noun, but not when the clause is serving as an adverb. Another test, courtesy of Garner's Modern American Usage: "or not" is necessary when the phrase "whether or not" means "regardless of whether."

Here are several recent lapses, erring one way or the other (thanks to a sharp-eyed reader for one example):

> **#Whether she ever runs for anything else**, Ms. Palin has already achieved a status that has become an end in itself: access to an electronic bully pulpit, a staff to guide her, an enormous income and none of the bother or accountability of having to govern or campaign for office.

It should be "whether or not." (Use Garner's test: it's the equivalent of "regardless of whether she ever runs …")

> **#Whether any such approach works**, the founders would have expected us to do something about this unconstitutional filibuster.

Ditto. Make it "whether or not any such approach works" (or, "whether any such approach works or not …")

> #Commentators in the English media often bemoan the national team's lack of elite strikers. Manager Fabio Capello has tried Jermain Defoe, Peter Crouch, Gabriel Agbonlahor and Darren Bent as partners to the mercurial Wayne Rooney. And then there has been the long-running saga **about whether or not to recall** Michael Owen for the World Cup in South Africa.

No need for "or not." The "whether" phrase is the object of "about."

> The Reserve Bank has sent PayPal a list of questions, focusing **on whether or not personal payments** to people in India qualify as remittances, or wire transfers of cash, PayPal said.

Here, too, "or not" is superfluous.

Coordination and Subordination Together

Using coordination and subordination together, you can arrange all the parts of a sentence according to their relative importance and the desired emphasis. For example:

1. No one had the guts to raise a riot.

2. But suppose a European women went through the bazaars alone.

3. Somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress.

> COMBINED: No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress --- George Orwell

In the combined sentence, sentence 1 and 3 remain independent clauses, though they are now joined by *but*. The result is a compound sentence. Within it, sentence 2 becomes a subordinate clause introduced by *if*. Here is another example:

> When Matthew heard about the accident, he molded his face into a mask as he had seen actors do, and he holed up in his bedroom, where he unplugged his stereo and tried to cry.

3.7.9.2　Independent clauses

He molded his face into a mask

He holed up in his bedroom

He unplugged his stereo

He tried to cry

3.7.9.3 Dependent clauses

When Matthew heard about the accident (what happened?)

As he had seen actors do (what did he do?)

3.7.10 Coordination

He unplugged his stereo and tried to cry (A dependent clause using coordinating conjunction *and*)

He molded his face into a mask and he holed up in his bedroom (A compound sentence using coordinating conjunction *and*). This compound sentence is the principal thought.

3.7.11 Subordination

The principal thought above is modified by several subordinate clauses

When Matthew heard about the accident (when did he mold his face and hole up in his bedroom?)

Where he unplugged his stereo and tried to cry (what did he do when he was holed up in his bedroom?)

Consider the following simple sentences:

> ➢ The snow melts in the spring.
>
> ➢ The dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams.
>
> ➢ Certain people live in isolated houses.
>
> ➢ Those people use old footpaths to reach Bridgeton.

> ➤ Bridgeton has two grocery stores.
>
> ➤ It has one gas pump.

Depending on what is being emphasized, there are several ways the sentences can be combined.

> ➤ Combination 1: The snow melts in the spring, so the dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams; certain people live in isolated houses, and those people use old footpaths to reach Bridgeton, which has two grocery stores and one gas pump.
>
> ➤ Combination 2: When the snow melts in the spring, the dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams, so people who live in isolated houses use old footpaths to reach Bridgeton, which has two grocery stores and one gas pump.

The first combination uses so to create a compound sentence coordinating two thoughts signaling *with the results that*. The two clauses have the same emphasis.

> ➤ The snow melts in the spring, so that the dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams.

The second combination uses a subordinate clause with the conjunction when to emphasize the dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams.

> ➤ When the snow melts in the spring, the dirt roads in the region turn into muddy streams.

The emphasis in the second combination is on the dirt roads turning into muddy streams, which happens when the snow melts in the spring.

The semicolon in the first combination is a coordinating punctuation used to join two principle thoughts: the dirt roads turn into muddy steams and people using footpaths to get to Bridgeton. The conjunctive adverb *so* in the second combination coordinates two thoughts: the dirt roads turn into muddy streams and people having to use old footpaths. The second combination adds

more emphasis to the dirt roads turning into muddy streams providing the answer to what happens and what consequences emerge from that principle thought.

3.7.12   Untangling Sentences

Putting several ideas into a single sentence without getting them tangled up in the process is difficult and risky. Consider this sentence:

> ➤ Due to the process in military weaponry over the years, there has been an increased passivity in humankind that such advancements bring as wars are easier to fight resulting in a total loss of honor in fighting.

This sentence is poorly structured, difficult to read and cause confusion. If you come across such a sentence in your own writing, you should first of all break it up into single ideas:

1. There has been progress in military weaponry over the years.

2. There has been increased passivity in humankind.

3. Such advancements bring passivity.

4. The passivity is due to the progress.

5. Wars are easier to fight.

6. This results in a total loss of honor in fighting.

Once you've broken up the sentence into single ideas, you can use coordination and subordination to put them back together clearly:

> ➤ Since progress in military weaponry over the years has made humankind more passive and wars easier to fight, there has been a total loss of honor in fighting.

> ➤ [or] Since progress in military weaponry over the years has made humankind more passive and wars easier to fight, fighting has lost all honor.

3.8   Using Pronouns

Pronouns were introduced in Section 2 Mechanics. This Section explores how pronouns are used to build sentences and how their misuse lead to poorly structured sentences. The meaning of a definite pronoun is clear when readers can identify the antecedent with certainty:

> ➢ People who saw the Tall Ships sail up the Hudson River in 1976 will long remember the experience. It gave them a handsome image of a bygone era.

The antecedent of each pronoun is obvious.

Who → people

It → Experience

Them → People who saw the Tall Ships

3.8.1 Avoiding Unclear Pronoun Reference

The meaning of a definite pronoun is unclear when readers cannot identify the antecedent with certainty. The chief obstacles are as follows:

3.8.1.1   Ambiguity

A pronoun is ambiguous when it has more than one possible antecedent:

> ➢ Whenever Mike met Dan, he felt nervous.

Does he refer to Mike or to Dan? The simplest way to eliminate this ambiguity is to replace the pronoun with a noun.

> ➢ Edited: Whenever Mike met Dan, Mike felt nervous.

To avoid repeating the noun, you can put the pronoun before it:

> ➢ Whenever he met Dan, Mike felt nervous.

3.8.1.2   Broad Reference

Pronoun reference is broad when that, this, which, or it refers to a whole statement containing one or more possible antecedents within it:

> ➢ The senator supports the bottle bill, which rankles many of his constituents.

Are they rankled by the bill, or by the senator's support for it?

> ➢ Edited: The senator's support for the bottle bill rankles many of his constituents

Here's another example:

> ➢ Some people insist that a woman should have a career, while others say that she belongs in the home. This is unfair.

What is unfair? This could refer to the whole sentence that precedes it, to the first half, or to the second.

> ➢ Edited: The contradictory demands on a woman is unfair.

3.8.1.3   Muffled Reference

Pronoun reference is muffled when the pronoun refers to something merely implied by what precedes it:

> ➢ A recent editorial contained an attack on the medical profession. The writer accused them of charging excessively high fees.

Who is meant by *them*? Before using *them*, the writer should clearly establish its antecedent:

Edited: A recent editorial contained an attack on hospital administrators and doctors. The writers accused them of charging excessively high fees.

Here's another example:

> Lincoln spoke immortal words at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear it.

The writer is thinking of Lincoln's address, but the word *address* is missing causing a muffled reference. It must be inserted:

> Lincoln gave an immortal address at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear it.

Or

> Lincoln spoke immortal words at Gettysburg, but most of the large crowd gathered there couldn't hear his address.

> [or] …. couldn't hear them.

3.8.1.4 Free-Floating They and It

They and *it* are free-floating when they are used as pronouns but have no definite antecedents.

> In the first part of the movie, it shows clouds billowing like waves.

What shows clouds? The pronoun *it* has no antecedent. The writer is probably thinking of *it* that simply fills out a sentence, such as *It was cloudy*, meaning *There were clouds*. That kind of it (called an expletive) needs no antecedent. But the pronoun *it* does. If you can't readily figure out a way to furnish one, reconstruct the sentence:

> Edited: The first part of the movie shows clouds billowing like waves.

Here's another example:

> Traveling in Eastern Europe used to be difficult. At some checkpoints they held foreigners for questioning.

The word *they* needs an antecedent.

> ➤ Edited: Traveling in Eastern Europe used to be difficult because of the secret police. At some checkpoints they held foreigners for questioning.

 Alternatively, you could replace the pronoun with a noun.

> ➤ At some checkpoints the secret police held foreigners for questioning.

3.8.1.5   Indefinite You and Your

You and *your* are indefinite when used to mean anything but the reader. Though writers normally use you to mean "people in general," you will increase the precision of your sentences if you use you and your for your reader alone.

> ➤ #You didn't have microphones in Lincoln's day.
>
> ➤ Edited: There were no microphones in Lincoln's day.

3.8.1.6   Remote Reference

Pronoun reference is remote when the pronoun is to far from the antecedent that readers cannot find their way from one to the other:

> ➤ Bankers have said that another increase in the prime lending rate during the current quarter would seriously hurt their major customers: homeowners, small-business personnel, and self-employed contractors using heavy equipment. It would keep all of these borrowers from getting needed capital.

The pronoun *it* is placed too far its antecedent *another increase*, and separated by other nouns. It is better to restructure the sentence to refer back to the antecedent:

> ➤ Edited: Such an increase would keep all of these borrowers from getting needed capital.

3.8.2 Making Antecedents and Pronouns Agree in Gender

In some languages, many words change in form to indicate gender. In English, gender affects only personal pronouns referring to a single being or thing in the third person (e.g. he, she, it, and they). The gender of a personal pronoun in the third-person singular depends on the gender of its antecedent.

> ➤ When Marie Curie outlined the first steps of the award-winning research to *her* husband, *he* encouraged *her* to complete *it*. Though *he* himself was an eminent chemist, *he* wanted *her* to gain credit for it.

When the antecedent is a word of unspecified gender such as doctor or lawyer, you should use something other than a singular masculine pronoun (e.g. use gender-inclusive language such as plurals – doctors instead of doctor, and *they* as the pronoun, or use feminine pronoun to balance the male pronoun).

3.8.3 Making Antecedents and Pronouns Agree in Number

A singular antecedent calls for a singular pronoun; a plural antecedent calls for a plural pronoun.

> ➤ The boy saw that he had cut his hand.
>
> ➤ The Edmonton Oilers believed that they could win the Stanley Cup in 1988, and they did.

3.8.4 Resolving Problems in Number

Some antecedents can be hard to classify as either singular or plural. Here are some guidelines:

3.8.4.1 Two or more nouns or pronouns joined by AND are usually plural

> ➤ Orville and Wilbur Wright are best known for *their* invention of the airplane.

Nouns joined by *and* are singular only if they refer to one person or thing:

> ➢ The chief cook and bottle washer demanded *his* pay.

3.8.4.2 When two nouns are joined by OR or NOR, the pronoun agrees with the second noun

Neither Pierre LaCroix nor his boldest followers wanted to expose *themselves* to danger.

3.8.4.3 A noun or pronoun followed by a prepositional phrase is treated as if it stood by itself

> ➢ In 1980 Canada, together with the United States and several other countries, kept *its* athletes from participating in the Moscow Olympics.

The antecedent of *its* is Canada, Unlike the conjunction *and*, a phrase like *together with* or *along with* does not make a compound antecedent.

3.8.4.4 Collective nouns can be either singular or plural, depending on the context

> ➢ The team chooses its captain in the spring.

Since the captain is the symbol of unity, the writer treats *the team* as singular, using the singular pronoun *its*.

> ➢ The audience shouted and stamped *their* feet.

Since each person in the audience was acting independently, the writer treats the audience as plural, using their as the pronoun.

Some indefinite pronouns are singular, some are plural, and some can be either singular or plural

Always singular

Anybody	Either	One

Anyone	Neither	Another
Anything		
Each	Nobody	Somebody
Each one	None	Someone
	No one	Something
Everybody	Nothing	
Everyone		Whatever
Everything		Whichever
		whoever

Always Plural

Both	Few	Others	Several

Sometimes singular and sometimes plural

All	Many	Some
Any	Most	

Each by itself is always singular:

> ➢ Each of the men brought his own tools

But each does not change the number of a plural subject that follows:

> ➢ The men each brought their own tools

Though some writers treat everybody and everyone as plural, we suggest you treat them as singular or simply avoid using them as antecedents:

> ➢ Everyone in the cast had to furnish his or her own costume.
>
> ➢ All cast members had to furnish their own costume.

The number of a pronoun in the third group depends on the number of the word or phrase to which it refers:

> ➢ Some of the salad dressing left its mark on my shirt.
>
> ➢ Some of the students earn their tuition by working part-time.
>
> ➢ Many of the customers do not pay their bills on time.
>
> ➢ Many a man learns to appreciate his father only after he has become one himself.

The number of a relative pronoun depends on the number of the antecedent:

> ➢ Mark is one of those independent carpenters *who want* to work for themselves

Who refers to the plural carpenters.

> ➢ Marilyn is the only one of the gymnasts *who wants* to compete in the Olympics

Who refers to *only one*.

3.8.5 Avoiding Faulty Shifts

Avoid using they, them, or their with a singular antecedent:

> ➢ No one should be forced into a career that they do not want to pursue.

3.8.5.1 Avoid shifting the reference of a pronoun from one grammatical person to another:

> ➤ When one [third person] is alone, one is free to do whatever you [second person] want.

> ➤ Edited: When one is alone, one is free to do whatever one wants.

Or

> ➤ When you are alone, you are free to do whatever you want.

3.8.6 Pronoun Case Forms

In sentences, the form of the pronoun depends partly on its case—the grammatical role it plays in the sentence.

> ➤ The Kiowas are a summer people; *they* abide the cold and keep to *themselves*, but when the season turns and the land becomes warm and vital, *they* cannot hold still; an old love of going returns upon *them*.

Personal Pronoun							
	I	He	she	it	we	you	they
Subject case	I	He	she	it	we	you	they
Object case	me	Him	her	it	us	you	them

Possessive case	My, mine	His	Her, hers	it	Our, ours	Your, yours	Their, theirs
Reflexive/ Emphatic case	myself	Himself	herself	itself	ourselves	Yourself, yourselves	themselves
Pronouns use in questions and adjective clauses							
Subject case	Who	Whoever					
Object case	whom	Whoever					
Possessive case	whose						

3.8.6.1 Subject case

Use the subject case when the pronoun is the subject of a verb

> ➤ When Adam and Eve were accused of eating the forbidden fruit, they each excused themselves; he blamed Eve for tempting him, and she blamed the serpent for tempting her.

3.8.6.2 Object Case

Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a verb:

> ➤ We heard birds but could not see them.

Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a gerund, infinitive, or participle:

> Hearing them made use eager to see them.

> Seeing them, we could hardly believe our eyes.

Use the object case when the pronoun is the object of a preposition:

> I hate to spread rumors, but what else can one do with them?

Use the object case when the pronoun comes immediately before an infinitive:

> A sentry ordered us to leave the area.

3.8.6.3 Possessive Case

Use the possessive case of the pronoun—with no apostrophe—to indicate ownership of an object or close connection to it:

> My car has a dent in its right rear door.

> The car with the new paint job is hers.

Use the possessive case of the pronoun before a gerund.

> Joan hoped that her leaving the class early would not be noticed.

3.8.6.4 Reflexive/Emphatic Case

Use the reflexive/emphatic case of the pronoun when

1. The object of a verb or preposition is a pronoun referring to the subject:

> He gazed at himself in the mirror as she dressed herself.

2. You want to stress the antecedent of the pronoun:

> The governor herself conceived the new plan.

3.8.7 Using Who, Whom, Whose, Whoever, and Whomever

The form you need depends on which grammatical role the pronoun plays in the sentence or clause that contains it. Observe the following guidelines:

1. Use who or whoever whenever the pronoun is a subject:

> ➢ Some people who attended the concert were lucky.
>
> ➢ Tickets were given away to whoever wanted them.

2. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is an object:

> ➢ To whom can we turn?
>
> ➢ Some voters will support whomever their party nominates.
>
> ➢ They back a candidate whom others have selected.

A sentence like this last one can be tightened by the omission of whom:

> ➢ They back a candidate others have selected.

And if you find whomever stiff, you can replace it with anyone.

> ➢ Some voters will support anyone their party nominates.

3. Use *whose* whenever the pronoun is a possessor:

> ➢ The colt whose picked skeleton lay out there was mine.

3.8.8 Misusing Pronoun Case Forms

To avoid misusing the case forms of pronouns, observe the following guidelines:

1. Use the same case forms for pronouns linked by and:

> ➢ #Her and I went swimming every day.

Her is the object case; I is the subject case. Since they are linked by and, they should be in the same case.

> ➢ She and I went swimming every day.
>
> ➢ #He and myself took turns driving.
>
> ➢ Edited: He and I took turns driving.
>
> ➢ #There was little to choose between them and we.
>
> ➢ Edited: There was little to choose between them and us.

2. Avoid using me, him, myself, himself, herself, or themselves as the subject of a verb:

> ➢ #Me and Sally waited three hours for a bus
>
> ➢ Edited: Sally and I waited three hours for a bus.

3. Avoid using a –self pronoun as the object of a verb unless the pronoun refers to the subject:

> ➢ #The director chose Laura and ~~myself~~ me for two minor parts, and then cast herself in the leading role.

4. Avoid using a –self pronoun as the object of a preposition:

> ➢ #The letter was addressed to ~~myself~~ me.

#The director has to choose between Laura and ~~myself~~ me.

5. Avoid using I, he, she, we, or they as the object of a verb or preposition:

> ➢ #My uncle always brought presents for my sister and ~~I~~ me.
>
> ➢ #We rarely gave anything to my aunt or ~~he~~ him.

3.9 Word Choices in Sentences

An idiom is a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g., *rain cats and dogs*, *see the light, kick the bucket*). It is also defined as a distinct style or dialect peculiar to certain people. Sentences are built based on usage of specific words that do not work when other words are used. For example, *we do work, we hold a job, follow a trade, pursue an occupation*, and *engage in a line of business.* Use accurate words that express the intended meaning. You need to watch for garbled idioms.

> ➢ Garbled: #Unemployment *played* an important *factor*
>
> ➢ Should be: Unemployment *played* an important *role*

When building sentences, use specific, informative words instead of colorless ones.

3.10 Building a Stronger Sentence

3.10.1 Effective Predication

Make the important thing the subject of the sentence, not "one crucial factor" or "one of the things" – which are semantic blanks and carry little of the meaning. Watch for nouns ending with –ment, -ion, -ism, and the like serving as the subject. This structure can be replaced with the agent clearly identified and serving as the subject and the event or activity as a verb.

> ➢ #A certain element of confusion was present.
>
> ➢ Edited: The speaker confused us

Here's another example:

> ➢ #A *criticism* which is prevalent against modern poetry *is* that *its appeal is* only to the super-sophisticated.
>
> ➢ Edited: Many critics charge that modern poetry appeals only to the super-sophisticated.

Watch for "the simple fact is that", or "the question now confronting us is whether".

3.10.2 Avoid Poor Use of Coordinating Connectives Like "And" and "But"

But --- implies something that is equally important

And – More of same (see if this is really necessary, does the clause that follow really give us more of the same by reinforcing the same point?)

And – As they happen

Use it when events follow as they happen without emphasis on cause and effect or other logical relations.

Avoid "and" when it merely makes a sentence ramble on, without preparing the reader for what is coming

> ➤ Rambling: A member of the reserve has to participate in weekly drills, *and* he may be called up in emergencies, which came as an unpleasant surprise to me, *and* you would do better to stay away from it.

3.10.3 Avoid the Loose Sentence

If you put your main point at the beginning of a long sentence, you are writing a **loose sentence**:

> ➤ **#I am willing to pay slightly higher taxes for the privilege of living in Canada**, considering the free health care, the cheap tuition fees, the low crime rate, the comprehensive social programs, and the wonderful winters.

The main point of this sentence is that the writer prefers to live in Canada, and the writer makes the point at the very beginning: everything which follows is simply extra information. When the readers read about the free health care, the cheap tuition fees, the low crime rate, the comprehensive social programs, and the wonderful winters, they will already know that these are reasons for living in Canada, and as a result, they will be more likely to understand the sentence on a first reading.

Loose sentences are the most natural for English speakers, who almost always talk in loose sentences: even the most sophisticated English writers tend to use loose sentences much more often than periodic sentences. While a periodic sentence can be useful for making an important point or for a special dramatic effect, it is also much more difficult to read, and often requires readers to go back and reread the sentence once they understand the main point.

Finally, it is important to remember that you have to structure a loose sentence as carefully as you would structure a periodic sentence: it is very easy to lose control of a loose sentence so that by the end the reader has forgotten what your main point was.

3.10.4   *Using the Periodic Sentence*

If your main point is at the end of a long sentence, you are writing a **periodic sentence**:

periodic

> ➤ Considering the free health care, the cheap tuition fees, the low crime rate, the comprehensive social programs, and the wonderful winters, **I am willing to pay slightly higher taxes for the privilege of living in Canada**.

The main point of this sentence is that the writer prefers to live in Canada. At the beginning of this sentence, the reader does not know what point the writer is going to make: what about the free health care, cheap tuition fees, low crime rate, comprehensive social programs, and

wonderful winters? The reader has to read all of this information *without* knowing what the conclusion will be.

The periodic sentence has become much rarer in formal English writing over the past hundred years, and it has never been common in informal spoken English (outside of bad political speeches). Still, it is a powerful rhetorical tool. An occasional periodic sentence is not only dramatic but persuasive: even if the readers do not agree with your conclusion, they will read your evidence first with open minds. If you use a loose sentence with hostile readers, the readers will probably close their minds before considering any of your evidence.

Finally, it is important to remember that periodic sentences are like exclamatory: used once or twice in a piece of writing, they can be very effective; used any more than that, they can make you sound dull and pompous.

3.10.5 Using the Declarative Sentence

The **declarative sentence** is the most important type. You can, and often will write entire essays or reports using *only* declarative sentences, and you should always use them far more often than any other type. A declarative sentence simply states a fact or argument, without requiring either an answer or action from the reader. You punctuate your declarative sentences with a simple period.

> ➢ Ottawa is the capital of Canada.
>
> ➢ The distinction between deconstruction and post-modernism eludes me.
>
> ➢ He asked which path leads back to the lodge.

Note that the last example contains an **indirect question**, "which path leads back to the lodge." An indirect question does not make a sentence into an interrogative sentence – only a direct question can do that.

3.10.6 *Using the Interrogative Sentence*

An **interrogative sentence** asks a direct question and always ends in a question mark:

> ➢ Who can read this and not be moved?
>
> ➢ How many roads must a man walk down?
>
> ➢ Does money grow on trees?

Note that an indirect question does not make a sentence interrogative:

3.10.6.1 Direct/Interrogative

When was Lester Pearson prime minister?

3.10.6.2 Indirect/Declarative

I wonder when Lester Pearson was prime minister.

A direct question requires an answer from the reader, while an indirect question does not.

3.10.6.3 The Rhetorical Question

Normally, an essay or report will not contain many regular direct questions, since you are writing it to present information or to make an argument. There is, however, a special type of direct question called a **rhetorical question** -- that is, a question which you do not actually expect the reader to answer:

> ➢ Why did the War of 1812 take place? Some scholars argue that it was simply a land-grab by the Americans ...

If you do not overuse them, rhetorical questions can be a very effective way to introduce new topics or problems in the course of a paper; if you use them too often, however, you may sound patronizing and/or too much like a professor giving a mediocre lecture.

3.10.7 Using the Exclamatory Sentence

An **exclamatory sentence**, or **exclamation**, is simply a more forceful version of a declarative sentence, marked at the end with an exclamation mark.

> ➤ The butler did it!
>
> ➤ How beautiful this river is!
>
> ➤ Some towns in Upper Canada lost up to a third of their population during the cholera epidemics of the early nineteenth century!

Exclamatory sentences are common in speech and (sometimes) in fiction, but over the last 200 years they have almost entirely disappeared from academic writing. You will (or should) probably never use one in any sort of academic writing, except where you are quoting something else directly. Note that an exclamation mark can also appear at the end of an imperative sentence.

3.10.8 Using the Imperative Sentence

An **imperative sentence** gives a direct command to someone -- this type of sentence can end either with a period or with an exclamation mark, depending on how forceful the command is:

> ➤ Sit!
>
> ➤ Read this book for tomorrow.

You should not usually use an exclamation mark with the word "please":

> ➤ Wash the windows!
>
> ➤ Please wash the windows.

Normally, you should not use imperative sentences in academic writing. When you do use an imperative sentence, it should usually contain only a mild command, and thus, end with a period:

> ➤ Consider the Incas.

3.11 Sentence Styles

Sentences are effective when the style of the sentence fit what they were built for. None of these styles are inherently better or worse than the others. They are also not mutually exclusive. A skillful writer calls upon all of them.

3.11.1   Segregating Sentence—A series of short sentences

Short sentences are strong, has potential for dramatic description, and helps analyze the action. A segregating style consists of relatively short, uncomplicated sentences, even though some of them may not be simple in the grammatical sense. A segregating sentence may include several ideas but their staccato pace suggests the rush and violence of events. This style is usually effective in narrative and description.

> ➤ He writes, at most, 750 words a day. He writes and rewrites. He polishes and re-polishes. He works in solitude. He works with agony. He works with sweat. And that is the only way to work at all. --- Beverly Nichols.

As this passage shows, a segregating style can be very effective. The write wants to stress that writing often is monotonous. Such fit between sentence style and purpose is important to good writing. The same general point may be put in any of various ways, but no two of the ways will be the same, and only one will be exactly what you want to say.

The segregating style is less useful in exposition, where you must combine ideas in subtle gradations of logic and importance. These subtleties cannot be conveyed by a series of

short, independent statements, which treat all ideas as equally important. Individually used, however, segregating sentences are valuable in exposition, especially set beside longer statements, where they will all seem strong and clear. The next example shows how the first short sentence emphasizes and clarifies the theme of the passage. The next two longer sentences elaborate on this theme.

> ➢ The next object was to get rid of the ministers. Madrid was supplied with provisions by a monopoly. The Government looked after this most delicate concern as it looked after everything else.

3.11.1.1 Freight-train Sentence

While the segregating sentence usually presents a single idea, the freight-train sentence consists of more than one idea in several independent clauses and may take the form of multiple coordination, joined by *and* (less often by *but, or, nor*). Or the sentence may be paratactic (using parataxis). It is essentially a development of the compound sentence.

> ➢ Maybe she would pretend that I was her boy that was killed and we would go in the front door and the porter would take off his cap and I would stop at the concierge's desk and ask for the key and . . .

The freight-train sentence is useful when you wish to link a series of events, ideas, impressions, feelings, or perceptions as immediately as possible, without judging their relative value or imposing a logical structure upon them. Hemingway writes in this fashion to describe an experience taking place within the mind, or a continuous flow of dreaming, or a stream of loosely connected feelings, ideas and images, not in neatly packaged sentences of intricately related clauses and phrases tied together by *if, but, yet, therefore, consequently, on the other hand*. It imitates the mental states of the subject depicting a stream of consciousness, a way of

writing that suggests a mind feeling, dreaming, thinking in loose associational manner. This style of writing can be very useful in anthropological or ethnographic writing.

The last example shows the use of multiple coordination to build a freight-train sentence. The use of multiple coordination directs our senses much as a camera directs them in a film, guiding us from one perception to the another, yet creating a continuous experience. The freight-train style analyzes experience much like a series of segregating sentences, but it brings the parts more closely together and achieves a high degree of fluidity.

On the other hand, fluidity is not always desirable. Ideas or perceptions may be repetitive, with little change and nothing to flow together. Then parataxis is preferable to multiple coordination. In the following example Virginia Woolf, summarizing a diary of an eighteenth-century Englishman visiting France, uses a freight-train style with parataxis to mock his insularity:

> ➤ That is what he writes about, and, of course, about the habits of the natives. The habits of the natives are disgusting; the women hawk on the floor, the forks are dirty; the trees are poor; the Pont Neuf is not a patch on London Bridge; the cows are skinny; morals are licentious; polish is good; cabbages cost so much; bread is made of coarse flour.

In this example, each detail is another instance of the same underlying insensitivity.

By hooking her clauses with semicolons (in one case with a comma) Woolf stresses the dull, unyielding vision of the diarist.

Along with its advantages, the freight-train sentence has limitations. Like the segregating style, it does not handle ideas very subtly. The freight-train sentence implies that the thoughts it links together with grammatical equality are equally significant. But usually ideas are not of the same order of importance; some are major, others secondary. Moreover, this type of construction cannot show very precise logical relationships of cause and effect, condition, concession, and

so on. It joins ideas only with such general conjunctions as *and, but, or, nor* or even less exactly with semicolons and commas.

3.11.1.2 The Triadic Sentence

Another deficiency of the freight-train style is that because it is open-ended it lacks definite shape. It has no necessary stopping place; one could go on adding clauses indefinitely. As a way of providing it with a clearer structural principle, the freight-train sentence is sometimes composed as a triad—in three units.

> ➤ They loomed, they bulged, they impeded.
>
> ➤ Her showmanship was superb; her timing sensational; her dramatic instinct uncanny.

In both examples, semicolons and commas, not conjunctions, separate these ideas. They are used instead of conjunctions to highlight the repetitive nature of the action. It uses conjunctions when a sufficient change occurs in the subject, for example:

> ➤ Then the first star came out and the great day was over and in the vestibule I saw my grandmother saluted by her sons who wished her a happy holiday. – Ludwig Lewisohn

The subject shifted from "first star" to "great day" to "her sons," three subjects doing three different things. The final clause is substantially longer than the two preceded it. This movement to a longer, more complicated final construction is a refinement of the triadic sentence. Here's another example of such a movement:

> ➤ The canisters were almost out of reach; I made a mention to aid her; she turned upon me as a miser might turn if anyone attempted to assist him in counting his money – Emily Bronte

Occasionally the shift may work in the opposite direction, from long to short, resulting in a more emphatic sentence:

> ➤ Calvin Coolidge believed that the least government was the best government; he aspired to become the least President the country ever had; he attained his desire. – Irving Stone

In the next example the subject is the same, but the action is not repetitive, so both conjunction and the comma are used to indicate the difference in actions.

> ➤ These new listeners cheered the florid Coughlin rhetoric and the roll of the great metaphors, and they followed with angry approval when the voice rose in jeremiads, and they grew solemn when it fell in heavy warning.

3.11.1.3 The Cumulative Sentence

The cumulative sentence contains a main clause that precedes a series—often quite long—of appositive, modifying, or absolute phrases (subordinate clauses) which accumulate details about the scene, person, or event being described. Although they are subordinate, they carry the main load of the sentence. They often appear in description, beginning with a general picture, then fills in the picture with details.

> ➤ A creek ran through the meadow, winding and turning, clear water running between steep banks of black earth, with shallow places where you could build a dam. –Mark Shorer

This example contains a general scene + pair of participles + modified appositive + participle modified by two prepositional phrases and a prepositional phrase + a relative clause.

Cumulative sentences are also useful in character sketches:

> ➤ She was then twenty-one, a year out of Smith College, a dark, shy, quiet girl with a fine mind and a small but pure and valuable gift for putting her thoughts and fancies, about the earth, sky, and sea, on paper. –John Lardner

Those less often used in narration, the cumulative sentence can also handle a series of events, as in this account of an English military expedition into France in 1359:

> ➤ The unwieldy provision carts, draught horses, and heavily armed knights kept the advance down to nine miles a day, the huge horde moving in three parallel columns, cutting broad highways of litter and devastation through an already abandoned countryside, many of the adventures now traveling on foot, having sold their horses for bread or having slaughtered them for meat. – John Gardner

Like the freight-train style, the cumulative style has the problem of being open-ended, without a natural stopping place. But the deficiency may be made good by artful construction. In this example, the end artfully assesses the meaning of the accumulated details in the long sentence:

> ➤ When they sat for a photograph together—two neat slim bodies, the girl unsmiling and her eyes astare, elbows and knees tight, hands clenched in her lap, immaculate to the throat in lacy white, and the young man with grin and straw hat both aslant, jaunty on the bench arm, one leg crossed, natty in this suit and tie complete with stickpin, his arm around her with fingers outspread possessively upon her shoulder—it was portrait not only of contrasts, but of a nation's lower middle class coming out of its cocoon. –William Gibson

The accumulation is gathered between dashes and intrudes into the middle of the main sentence. That sentence becomes the frame enclosing the details, a pattern nicely suted to what the sentence is about.

Another variety of the cumulative sentence reverses the order: the accumulated details precede the main clause. In the following example, a novelist begins by listing the essentials of a story:

> Conflicts and rivalries and their resolutions, pride and its fate, estrangement and
> reconciliation, revenge or forgiveness, quests and searches rewarded or unrewarded;
> abidingness versus change, love and its proof—these are among the constants, the themes
> of the story. –Elizabeth Bowen.

Bowen uses *these* to sum up all the preceding nouns and to act as the subject of the sentence.

3.12 Developing Parallel Sentences

Parallelism means two or more words, phrases and clauses have the same grammatical form
and an identical grammatical relationship ("Jack and Jill went up the hill", Jack and Jill are
parallel because they are both subjects of one verb—*went*—and are proper nouns). Balance
means that two or more words or constructions have essentially the same form and length and
have similar functions ("Jack went up the hill, and Jill went with him" consists of two balanced
clauses, both independent and both of the same pattern and of similar length)

> He said that he would go, and that, considering the situation, we ought to go too, even
> though we don't approve of the meeting.

In this example, "that he would go" and "that, considering the situation, we ought to go too" are
both parallel because each is a complement of "said". However, they are not balanced because
they are not the same length, and the second is more complicated, containing an interruption
phrase, and an adverbial clause ("even though we don't approve of the meeting")

> He said that he would go early and added that we should come later.

In this example, the clauses are balanced because both act as complements, are of identical
length and form, but not parallel because they are objects of different verbs ("said", "added").
To make it parallel we can use the same verb *said* for both complements:

> He said that he would go early and that we should come later.

3.12.1   *The Parallel Sentence*

The parallel sentence handles ideas more simultaneously by making several constructions perform the same grammatical role within the sentence. It is capable of organizing different kinds of clauses, phrases and constructions in the sentence creating a much stronger and emphatic structure.

> ➢ In its energy, its lyrics, its advocacy of frustrated jobs, rock is one long symphony of protest

This example uses three parallel objects of the preposition "in" and reads much better than "Rock is one long symphony of protest as shown in its energy, its lyrics, and its advocacy of frustrated jobs."

> ➢ The Department of Justice began a vigorous campaign to break up the corporate empires, to restore the free and open market, and to plant the feet of industry firmly on the road to competition.

This example uses three parallel infinitive phrases with different choice of words (with *to break up, to restore, to plant*) to clearly and graphically modify "campaign."

> ➢ Here is where the hot wind blows and the old ways do not seem relevant, where the divorce rate is double the national average and where one person in every thirty-eight lives in a trailer.

This example illustrates an alternative to the expletive "There is" using instead "Here is" and the use of three clauses that are parallel subjects of the verb "is", even though they come after "is". Also note the two adverbial clauses beginning with "where" and applying the conjunction "and" to create parallelism.

> ➤ I am interested in the folklore of Howard Hughes, in the way people react to him, in the terms they use when they talk about him

This example contains three parallel prepositional phrases, separated by commas all modifying "am interested"

> ➤ They reflect the society in which he lived, complacent, limited, content to enjoy its luxuries and its elegance, *proud of its theatre and Poussin's pictures, its silks and its sparkling wines*, light in its loves, troubled by no mysteries, sure of itself because it knew the steps in the formal dance that was its life.

This example uses seven adjectives (complacent, limited, content, proud, sure, light, troubled)—two of them participles (limited, troubled) to modify "society"; some of these adjectives are part of adjective phrases which contain parallel elements within themselves ("proud of its theatre and Poussin's pictures, its silk and its sparkling wines"). Note that this passage is a good example of how parallelism may be used to build a cumulative sentence.

> ➤ *There never did, there never will, and there never can* exist a Parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to the "end of time" or of commanding for ever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it.

This example turns what might have been a boring sentence starting with the expletive "There" into brilliantly written compound and complex sentence that brings out the characteristics of a particular parliamentary system. The subject of the sentence is a parallel construction consisting of "there never" + three different auxiliary verbs, *did, will and can* that bring emphasis to sentence. The sentence then uses several noun phrases that begins with "or" acting as objects.

"or any description of men"

"or any generation of men"

A simplified version of one thread in this sentence is:

> ➤ There never did exist a Parliament in any country possessed of the right of binding and controlling posterity to the "end of time."

The sentence builds on top of this simple sentence multiple meanings using parallel construction.

Parallel constructions are subject to a strict rule of style: they must be in the same grammatical form. Consider this opening of a sentence by the eighteenth-century political writer Edmund Burke:

> ➤ To complain of the age we live in, to murmur at the present possessors of power, to lament the past, to conceive extravagant hopes of the future, are the common dispositions of the greatest part of mankind.

This example uses four infinitive phrases (to complain, to murmur, to lament, to conceive) that function as common subjects to the verb "are."

All parallel constructions must be identical in their grammatical form. If infinitive is used in the first, it must be used in the following constructions. Parallelism is pleasing and impressive to hear—elaborate yet rhythmic and ordered, following a master plan for everything and everything placed. It is economical, using on element of a sentence to serve three or four others. For example, we can use a single subject to introduce several predicates, saving the bother of repeating the subject each time.

> ➤ We must somehow take a wider view, look at the whole landscape, really see it, and describe what's going on out here.

In this example, three infinitives are used as predicates to economically complete what the single subject "We" is doing.

Parallel sentences have several advantages. First, they are impressive and pleasing to hear, elaborate yet rhythmic and ordered, following a master plan with a place for everything and everything in its place. Second, parallelism is economical, using one element of a sentence to serve three or four others. Piling up several verbs after a single subject is probably the most common parallel pattern, as in the two examples just above. Paralleling verbs is particularly effective when describing a process or event. The sequence of the verbs analyzes the event and establishes its progress, and the concentration on verbs, without the recurrent intervention of the subject, focuses the sentence on action.

Paralleling verbs is effective in organizing a short description of a complex process or event. Each verb establishes a phase of the event; the sequence of verbs indicates its progress; this focuses the sentences properly upon the action.

> ➢ As the danger drew near they would *wheel* about, *toss* their heels into the air, and *dive* in a twinkling into their burrows. –Francis Parkman

Parallel verbs can also summarize action that extends over longer periods of time.

> ➢ From 1925 to 1928 Huey *mended* political fences, *kept* himself in the headlines, and *built* up a lucrative practice as attorney for some of the vested interests against which he ranted.

> ➢ Charles borrowed his way through Savoy, disappeared into the Alps, and emerged, early in September, at Asti, where his ally met him and escorted him to the suburbs of Milan.

Here parallelism enhanced meaning by increasing the possible connection of words within the sentence. The sentence brings "borrowed", "disappeared," and "emerged" into a special relationship (an ironic assessment of the French king), making this invasion of Italy by Charles VII a hare-brained, fly-by-night affair, ill planned and ill executed).

Parallel verbs can also be used to imply sly amusement:

> ➤ She laid two fingers on my shoulder, cast another look into my face under her candle, turned the key in the lock, gently thrust me beyond the door, shut it; and left me to my own devices.

A third advantage of parallelism is its capacity to enrich meaning by emphasizing or revealing subtle connections between words. In the following example, parallel verbs insinuate a sardonic view of humanity under the surface of a prosaic summary of Joan's life

> ➤ Joan of Arc, a village girl from the Vosges, was born about 1412, burnt for heresy, withcraft, and sorcery in 1431; rehabilitated after a fashion in 1456; designated venerable in 1904; declared Blessed in 1908; and finally canonized in 1920. –Bernard Shaw

The meaning reinforced by a parallel style does not have to be ironic. It can have any emotional or intellectual coloring. Parallel verbs can imply anger:

> ➤ He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our homes, and destroyed the lives of our people. –Thomas Jefferson

Or eloquence:

> ➤ Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty. –John F. Kennedy

The parallel style is more suited for ideas that are logically parallel: several effects of the same cause, or three or four conditions of a single effect. It can become wordy if a writer allows the style to dominate him, padding out ideas to make a parallel sentence, instead of making a parallel sentence to organize ideas.

In summary, parallelism provides:

Clarity—easy to understand than those without the repeated grammatical structures.

Balance—make it easier for the reader to hold each of the ideas in mind while reading subsequent ones

Rhythm—More rhythmic

Elegance—Provides texture—even beauty—to writing which makes it engaging.

3.12.2   Making Parts of the Sentence Parallel

Any sentence parts can be paralleled:

3.12.2.1 Parallel subject

> ➢ The *carefully trimmed trees* in the front yard and the *spectacularly clean patio in the back* revealed the meticulous nature of the homeowner.

3.12.2.2 Parallel verbs and adverbs

> ➢ The agency had *frequently received* but *seldom revealed* a large number of crank phone calls.

3.12.2.3 Parallel Objects

> ➢ The doctor carefully examined *the heel*, *the ankle*, and *the toes*.

3.12.2.4 Parallel Verbs and Objects

➢ Mom went to Judy's room and *gave her a drink*, *pulled up her blanket*, and kissed her forehead.

3.12.2.5 Parallel Prepositional Phrases

➢ The dropped apple floated *down the river* and *under the bridge*.

Rough Parallelism—Elements don't exactly match

➢ *After concept drawings for the building are completed*, but *before we submit them to the planning department*, the design committee will take one more look at them.

3.12.2.6 Parallelism using long subordinate clauses

Parallelism helps the reader hold the entire sentence more easily.

➢ These early critics—*who point out the beauties of style and ideas*, *who discover the faults of false construction*, and *who discuss the application of the rules*—usually produce a much richer understanding of the writer's essay.

3.12.2.7 Parallelism to Express Contrasts and Alternatives

➢ *Baking in the summer sun* and *rusting in the winter rains*, the tractor deteriorated a **little more** each year.

➢ Flying a plane is **more** complicated than *turning a few knobs* and *pulling a few levers*.

➢ In evaluating the studies some fifty years after they began, it now seems **less** important to discuss them *in terms of their results* than *in terms of the theoretical approach upon which they were based*.

3.12.2.8 Parallelism for emphasis at the end of the sentence

➢ I shall never envy the honors which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given *ardor to virtue* and *confidence to truth.*

3.12.2.9 Parallelism of an entire sentence

➢ The goal of a theoretical science is truth, but the goal of a practical science is performance

3.12.2.10 Parallelism of two sentences

➢ After the first test, which used a rubber seal, the cylinder showed… After the second test, which used the new neoprene seal, the cylinder was …

3.12.2.11 Antithesis

Antithesis contrasts two ideas by placing them next to each other, almost always in the parallel structure. Developing contrasts is important for clear writing because it produces clarity, balance, and emphasis, all of which contribute to memorability.

➢ To err is human; to forgive, divine.

➢ That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.

➢ #We might succeed if we try; but if we do not try, then I do not think we can succeed.

➢ Edited: If we try, we might succeed; if we do not try, we cannot succeed.

Here "Might" is contrasted with "cannot".

3.13 Developing Balanced Sentences

A balanced sentence consists of two parts roughly equivalent in both length and significance and divided by a pause. Balanced constructions have similar form and function and approximately equal length, but do not necessarily relate grammatically to the same thing. Balanced elements may be played against one another, sometimes repeating the same idea and sometimes expressing contrasting ideas. It is most common with independent clauses although it can involve any sentence element. A sentence comprising two such clauses of roughly the same length and separated by a comma, semicolon, or colon is called a balanced sentence. Balanced elements may repeat the same idea, show cause and effect, precedence and subsequence, or any of other various relationships. Often balanced sentences develop a contrast; when the contrast is sharply pointed it is called an antithesis. While balance can involve any kind of clause or phrase, it is most common with independent clauses, as in the following examples:

> ➢ Visit either you like; they're both mad.

> ➢ In a few moments everything grew black; and the rain poured down like a cataract.

These two examples are compound sentences (two independent clauses); the first coordinated without a conjunction, the second with a conjunction. However, not all compound sentences are balanced, nor are all balanced sentences necessarily compound. Balance requires simply that a sentence divides into roughly equal halves on either side of a central pause. This may occur even in a sentence that is not technically compound:

> ➢ They read hardly at all, preferring to listen. –George Gissing

Gissing's sentence is grammatically simple, the first half being the main clause and the second a participial phrase. Even so, it is balanced since the halves are about the same length (each has six syllables) and equally important.

> ➢ To the fundamental question of human existence, astronomy has little value to offer.

This example is balanced, but is structured as a complex sentence with an introductory phrase. It can be symbolized using dashes in the following way: (--/--)

Sometimes writers further divide one half into two and so on. In this next example, the second half is divided into two clauses looking like (--/-- --)

> ➢ For being logical they strictly separate poetry from prose; and as in prose they are strictly prosaic, so in poetry, they are purely poetical

Balance involving smaller elements, such as words, phrases, or subordinate clauses, may occur within clauses as well as between them:

> ➢ In Plato's opinion *man* was made for *philosophy*; in Bacon's opinion *philosophy* was made for *man*; it was a means to an end; and that end was *to increase the pleasures and to mitigate the pains of millions* who are not and cannot be philosophers.

The writer achieves a more antithetical balance by repeating "man" and "philosophy" in reversed order. The infinitive phrases "to increase the pleasures and to mitigate the pains" are balanced; note that while the infinitives are parallel (both complements of "was"), the key terms "pleasure" and "pains" are balanced but not parallel (they follow different infinitives). Finally, "are not and cannot be" is both balanced and parallel.

3.13.1   Parallelism and balance often go hand in hand

> ➢ As for me, I frankly cleave to the Greeks and not to the Indians, and I aspire to be a rational animal rather than a pure spirit.

This sentence balances two coordinated clauses of similar structure and length. The first clause is the prepositional phrase "to the Greeks and not to the Indians" is parallel and antithetical. In the second clause "a rational animal rather than a pure spirit" is a parallel and balanced

construction (joined by "rather than"). These two major clauses are joined by "and" with the structure: (-- --/-- --).

This example shows a simple subject-verb-complement followed by a gerund+infinitive (--/--), balanced but not parallel.

> He seemed like a walking blasphemy, a blend of the angel and the ape. (--/--)

Balance can put focus on important words and enhance similarities and contrasts.

> In itself, a love idyll like this may seem harmless, but it won't be by itself very long.

The sentence swings and advances on the two phrases "in itself" and "by itself".

> Thinking out loud was his pastime; exchanging ideas was his passion.

This sentence balances key terms at either the end of its clauses; one pair—"pastime" and "passion"—are reinforced by alteration.

Balanced construction displays key terms, emphasizes them and encourages the reader to explore the implications suggested by playing one word against another. Here Charles Dickens forces us to consider the difference between having money and having the ability as well as the plight of those who lack the cash to turn their ideas to account:

> Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not.

Here the writer implies a skeptical assessment of politicians and bureaucrats in this balanced sentence:

> Ability we don't expect in a government office, but honesty one might hope for.

Balance is pleasing, gives shape to a sentence, and pleases the eye and ear of the reader. Implicit in the balanced style is a sense of objectivity, control, and proportion that reinforce a writer's argument or ideas. It is memorable. And by playing key terms against each other, it opens up their implications.

> ➢ In fine, there are things about Chesterfield that seem to me rather repellant; things that it is an offense in critics to defend. He is typical of one side of the eighteenth century—of what still seems to many its most typical side. But it does not seem to me the really good side of that century; and Chesterfield remains, I think, less an example of things to pursue in life than of things to avoid.

The balanced construction implies objectivity and increases the credibility of his criticism.

3.13.1.1 Chiasmus

Chiasmus is a type of parallelism in which the balanced elements are presented in reversed order rather than in the same order.

> ➢ The code breakers worked constantly but succeeded rarely.
>
> ➢ The code breakers worked constantly but rarely succeeded.

By changing the order to "rarely succeeded" the sentence reads better because of the variety introduced. Another useful effect is the natural emphasis given to the end of a sentence.

> ➢ What is learned unwillingly is forgotten gladly.
>
> ➢ What is learned unwillingly is gladly forgotten.

By reversing the order to "gladly forgotten" the sentence emphasize the end.

Reversing the order of independent and subordinate clauses is one way to add beauty without sacrificing clarity.

> ➢ When the house was finished, the buyers moved in; but when the insects invaded, the buyers moved out again.

> ➢ When the house was finished, the buyers moved in; but they quickly moved out again when the insects invaded.

The chiasmus prevented a pronoun reference problem if the writer had said, "When the house was finished, the buyers moved in; but when the insects invaded, they moved out again." Who is "they"? In the normal parallel examples, "buyers" had to be repeated to avoid confusion. Now chiasmus permitted a clear use of "they."

> ➢ If you come to them, they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant.

The first two clauses are parallel, as are the last two, but the first half of the sentence is in chiastic balance with the last half "if you come" and "if you ask" structures are reversed "if you make" and "if you are ignorant."

Reversal allows you to alter the emphasis within the sentences

> ➢ The prime minister smiled at the audience when he was introduced. However, he frowned after the cameras were turned off.

> ➢ The prime minister smiled at the audience when he was introduced. However, after the cameras were turned off, he frowned.

Emphasis is now on the frowning.

3.13.1.2 Hierarchic Structure

The units in serial structure, including parallel and balanced sentences, are treated more or less as equally significant. In hierarchic structure, inequality replaces equality. One idea becomes paramount and the others are gathered around it. Subordination, rather than coordination, parallelism, or balance, is the principle.

1. Main clause + subordinate constructions (loose structure)

2. Subordinate constructions + main clause (periodic structure)

3. Main clause interrupted + subordinate constructions + main clause completed (convoluted structure)

4. Subordinate constructions + main clause + additional subordinate constructions (centered structure)

3.13.1.3 Loose Sentence

In general, loose sentences tend to ramble. However, if the subordination is artfully done, even a loose sentence can be effective in helping the reader see the hierarchy of importance in the sentence:

> ➢ We must always be wary of conclusions drawn from the ways of the social insect, since their evolutionary track lies so far from ours.

We can increase the length and complexity of the loose sentence by adding further phrases and clauses, related either to the main clause or to something in the preceding subordinate constructions without rambling:

> ➢ We arrived at Odiham about half after eleven, at the end of a beautiful ride of about seventeen miles, in very fine and pleasant day.

In this example, two adverbial phrases are used to modify the main clause. Loose sentences are especially effective when short.

> ➢ I found a large hall, obviously a former garage, dimly lit, and packed with cots.

The loose sentence is ideal for writing that aims at being colloquial, informal, relaxed. It puts first things first, but lacks emphasis, and it can easily become formless.

3.13.1.4 The Periodic Sentence

Ancient rhetoricians used the periodic sentence to express a complex thought not brought to completion until the close. The periodic sentence is emphatic, formal and literary.

> ➢ If there is no future for the black ghetto, the future of all Negroes is diminished.
>
> ➢ Given a moist planet with methane, formaldehyde, ammonia, and some usable minerals, all of which abound, exposed to lightning or ultraviolet radiation at the right temperature, life might start almost anywhere.

There is no one formula for the periodic sentence. Often, the opening subordinate clause are adverbial clauses as in the following example:

If there is not future for the black ghetto, the future of all Negroes is diminished. –Stanley Sanders

Or it could be a participial phrase:

> ➢ Given a moist planet with methane, formaldehyde, ammonia, and some usable minerals, all of which abound, exposed to lightning or ultraviolet radiation at the right temperature, life might start almost anywhere. – Lewis Thomas

3.13.1.5 The Convoluted Sentence

In a convoluted sentence, the subordinate elements split it apart from the inside, often intruding between the subject and the verb and sometimes between the verb and object or within the verb phrase:

> ➢ White man, at the bottom of their hearts, know this. – James Baldwin
>
> ➢ None of this, naturally, was true.
>
> ➢ John Quinn, a heavy-set, blond college student, was always happy.
>
> ➢ Such clothes as they wear, a skirt of shredded bark, a buckskin breechclout, an occasional fur or feather cap, also blend into the natural background.

Used occasionally, instead of habitually, the periodic convoluted sentence is a good way of achieving variety in sentence movement. It also establishes strong emphasis by throwing weight upon the words preceding the commas or dashes which set off the intruding constructions.

> ➢ Now demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest.

This sentence expresses the principal idea more strongly than either loose or straightforward period sentences:

> ➢ Loose sentence: Now demons are full of interest, whatever else they may be.
>
> ➢ Periodic sentence: Now whatever else they may be, demons are full of interest.

It establishes strong emphasis by throwing weight upon the words before and after the commas or dashes setting off the interrupting constructions. This does not mean a convoluted sentence is better than either the periodic or loose sentence. It is simple a convenient way of establishing emphasis on particular words when that emphasis is desirable. A convoluted structure is formal,

and it can tax the reader's attention, especially as the interrupting elements grow longer and more complicated. Consider the following sentences:

> ➢ Even the humble ambition, which I long cherished, of making sketches of those places which interested me, from a defect of eye or of hand was totally ineffectual. – Sir Walter Scott

This is a good sentence, but not easy to read. Used sparingly, the long, intricate convoluted sentence has the advantage of the unusual.

3.13.1.6 The Centered Sentence

The centered sentence places the main clause more or less in the middle, with subordinate elements on either side. It has been called circuitous, or round composition.

> ➢ But when Custer reported that the hills were filled with gold "from the grass roots down," *parties of white men began forming like summer locusts*, crazy to begin panning and digging.

> ➢ Having wanted to walk on the sea like St. Peter, *he has taken an involuntary bath,* losing his mitre and the better part of his reputation. – Lawrence Durrell

This structure is not as emphatic as the periodic or as informal as the loose construction, it has its advantages, especially in long sentences with numerous subordinate clauses. It enables the writer to sort out and place those elements more clearly. It also allows the writer to reflect the natural order of events or of ideas. If half-a-dozen or more phrases and dependent clauses all precede the main clause (as in the periodic style), or all follow it (as in the loose), some may seem to float free. The link becomes obscure, especially when writing about ideas. The chance of obscurity is reduced if the main clause can be placed in the middle of the subordinate

elements. This is what Jonathan Swift does in criticizing England's participation in the War of the Spanish Succession:

> ➢ After ten years' fighting to little purpose, after the loss of above a hundred thousand men, and a debt remaining of twenty millions, we *at length hearkened to the terms of peace*, which was concluded with great advantage to the empire and to Holland, but none at all to us, and clogged soon after with the famous treaty of partition.

Notice how the main idea of leaning towards peace is modified by two different constructions, an introductory prepositional phrase (actually made up of three separate phrases), it is followed by compound phrase joined by the conjunction, *which was*. This sentence weaves nine different ideas which are chronologically ordered events. Effecting a workable compromise between the natural order of thought or of events on the one hand, and the grammatical order of the sentence on the other, is one of the most difficult tasks a writer faces. When you are dealing with a long and complicated subject, the centered sentence may prove the easiest solution to the problem.

3.13.1.7 Using Fragments Effectively

Fragments are commonly made up of participial phrases, adjectival phrases, and adverbial phrases. As discussed elsewhere, fragments create awkward sentences, but if properly applied, can be eye-catching, unusual and emphatic:

> ➢ "Many a man.," said Speer, "has been haunted by the nightmare that one day nations might be dominated by technical means. That nightmare was almost realized in Hitler's totalitarian system." Almost, but not quite.

The last sentence is really a fragment but it fits very well in the context.

Sweeping criticism of this type—like much other criticism—throws less light on the subject that on the critic himself. A light not always impressive. – F. L. Lucas.

Obviously, the effectiveness of fragments like these depends upon their being uncommon. It is best to deploy them very occasionally in formal composition, and only when you wish to draw attention to the idea they express.

A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject.

> ➤ Walking slowly down the road, he saw a woman accompanied by two children.

The word walking refers to the subject of the sentence, not to the woman. If the writer wishes to make it refer to the woman, he must recast the sentence:

> ➤ He saw a woman, accompanied by two children, walking slowly down the road.

Participial phrases preceded by a conjunction or by a preposition, nouns in apposition, adjectives, and adjective phrases come under the same rule if they begin the sentence.

> ➤ On arriving in Chicago, his friends met him at the station.
>
> ➤ When he arrived (or, On his arrival) in Chicago, his friends met him at the station.
>
> ➤ A soldier of proved valor, they entrusted him with the defense of the city.
>
> ➤ A soldier of proved valor, he was entrusted with the defense of the city.
>
> ➤ Young and inexperienced, the task seemed easy to me.
>
> ➤ Young and inexperienced, I thought the task easy.
>
> ➤ Without a friend to counsel him, the temptation proved irresistible.
>
> ➤ Without a friend to counsel him, he found the temptation irresistible.

Sentences violating this rule are often ludicrous.

> ➢ Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap.

References

This research writing guide gathers materials taken from the following texts and references and uses excerpts from them. Please refer to them for complete guidance.

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Section 4: Developing paragraphs and the Document

4.1 Definition

Paragraphs are clusters of information supporting the publications (article or book's) main point. By definition, it is a block of sentences set off by spacing or indentation at the beginning. Aim for paragraphs that are clearly focused, well developed, organized, coherent, and neither too long nor too short for easy reading.

Expository paragraphs deal with facts, ideas, beliefs. They explain, analyze, define, compare, illustrate. They answer questions like What? Why? How? What was the cause? The effect? Like what? Unlike what? They are the kinds of paragraph we write in research papers, reports or term papers. An expository paragraph is essentially an enlargement of a subject/predicate pattern like "Dogs bark." But the subject is more complicated and needs to be expressed in a clause or sentence, called the topic statement, which is usually placed at or near the beginning. The predicate—that is, what is asserted about the topic—requires several sentences. These constitute the body of the paragraph, developing or supporting the topic in any of several ways, ways we shall study in subsequent sections.

4.2 Why Use Paragraphs?

A piece of writing is like a long stairway. Unless it is interrupted now and then by a landing, a place to stop before continuing, the reader may simply get tired. Try reading a page with nothing but a block of print. The reader expects paragraph breaks at regular intervals, especially where the writer's thought turns. Instead of writing a whole block, the first paragraph normally establishes the topic, followed by the next paragraph that elaborates on the first point introduced in the first paragraph, followed again by another paragraph on the second point and so on. No

one can say how long a paragraph should be. Subject, purpose, audience, editorial fashion, and individual preference, all affect the length and complexity of paragraphs. As a rough rule of thumb, however, you might think of expository paragraphs in terms of 120 or 150 words. If most of your paragraphs fall below 100 words—50 or 60, say—the chances are they need more development. If your paragraphs run consistently to 200 or 300 words, they are probably too long and need to be shortened or divided. Numerous brief paragraphs are liable to be disjointed and underdeveloped.

4.3   Communicating Your Main Point

4.3.1 Elementary Principles

4.3.1.1   Make the paragraph the unit of composition: one paragraph to each topic

If the subject on which you are writing is of slight extent, or if you intend to treat it very briefly, there may be no need of subdividing it into topics. Thus a brief description, a brief summary of a literary work, a brief account of a single incident, a narrative merely outlining an action, the setting forth of a single idea, any one of these is best written in a single paragraph. After the paragraph has been written, it should be examined to see whether subdivision will not improve it.

Ordinarily, however, a subject requires subdivision into topics, each of which should be made the subject of a paragraph. The object of treating each topic in a paragraph by itself is, of course, to aid the reader. The beginning of each paragraph is a signal to him that a new step in the development of the subject has been reached.

The paragraph has unity by virtue of being organized around a single major point. Several examples may be brought in to support that point, and several ideas to qualify it, and several

sentences to illuminate its implications, but there's still only *a single major point*. The organization of the paragraph is typically:

1. Opening sentence—the topic sentence

2. Several ideas to qualify and examples to support the topic sentence

3. Several sentences to illuminate its implications

The extent of subdivision will vary with the length of the composition. For example, a short review of a book might consist of a single paragraph. One slightly longer might consist of two paragraphs:

A. Account of the work.

B. Critical discussion.

A historical event might be discussed under the heads:

A. What led up to the event.

B. Account of the event.

C. What the event led up to.

In treating either of these last two subjects, the writer would probably find it necessary to subdivide one or more of the topics here given.

As a rule, single sentences should not be written or printed as paragraphs. An exception may be made of sentences of transition, indicating the relation between the parts of an exposition or argument.

In dialogue, each speech, even if only a single word, is a paragraph by itself; that is, a new paragraph begins with each change of speaker. The application of this rule, when dialogue and narrative are combined, is best learned from examples in well printed works of fiction.

4.3.1.2 As a rule, begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, end it with conformity with the beginning

Again, the object is to aid the reader. The practice here recommended enables him to discover the purpose of each paragraph as he begins to read it, and to retain the purpose in mind as he ends it. For this reason, the most generally useful kind of paragraph, particularly in exposition and argument, is that in which

a. the topic sentence comes at or near the beginning;

b. the succeeding sentences explain or establish or develop the

statement made in the topic sentence; and

c. the final sentence either emphasizes the thought of the topic sentence or states some

important consequence.

Ending with a digression, or with an unimportant detail, is particularly to be avoided. If the paragraph forms part of a larger composition, its relation to what precedes, or its function as a part of the whole, may need to be expressed. This can sometimes be done by a mere word or phrase (again; therefore; for the same reason) in the topic sentence. Sometimes, however, it is expedient to precede the topic sentence by one or more sentences of introduction or transition. If more than one such sentence is required, it is generally better to set apart the transitional sentences as a separate paragraph.

According to the writer's purpose, he may, as indicated above, relate the body of the paragraph to the topic sentence in one or more of several different ways. He may make the meaning of the topic sentence clearer by restating it in other forms, by defining its terms, by denying the converse, by giving illustrations or specific instances; he may establish it by proofs; or he may develop it by showing its implications and consequences. In a long paragraph, he may carry out several of these processes.

Now, to be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone.	Topic sentence.
If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name; it is something else and more in the nature of a picnic.	The meaning made clearer by denial of the contrary.
A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence; because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you; and because you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl.	The topic sentence repeated, in abridged form, and supported by three reasons; the meaning of the third ("you must have your own pace") made clearer by denying the converse.
And you must be open to all impressions and let your thoughts take color from what you see.	A fourth reason, stated in two forms.
You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon.	The same reason, stated in still another form.
"I cannot see the wit," says Hazlitt, "of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country," which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter.	The same reason as stated by Hazlitt.

There should be no cackle of voices at your elbow, to jar on the meditative silence of the morning.	Repetition, in paraphrase, of the quotation from Hazlitt.
And so long as a man is reasoning he cannot surrender himself to that fine intoxication that comes of much motion in the open air, that begins in a sort of dazzle and sluggishness of the brain, and ends in a peace that passes comprehension.--Stevenson, Walking Tours.	Final statement of the fourth reason, in language amplified and heightened to form a strong conclusion.

Here is another excellent example of structuring the paragraph to explain history.

It was chiefly in the eighteenth century that a very different conception of history grew up.	Topic sentence
Historians then came to believe that their task was not so much to paint a picture as to solve a problem; to explain or illustrate the successive phases of national growth, prosperity, and adversity.	The meaning of the topic sentence made clearer; the new conception of history defined.
The history of morals, of industry, of intellect, and of art; the changes that take place in manners or beliefs; the dominant ideas that prevailed in successive periods; the rise, fall, and modification of political constitutions; in a	The definition expanded.

word, all the conditions of national well-being became the subjects of their works.	
They sought rather to write a history of peoples than a history of kings.	The definition explained by contrast.
They looked especially in history for the chain of causes and effects.	The definition supplemented: another element in the new conception of history.
They undertook to study in the past the physiology of nations, and hoped by applying the experimental method on a large scale to deduce some lessons of real value about the conditions on which the welfare of society mainly depend.--Lecky, *The Political Value of History*	Conclusion: an important consequence of the new conception of history.

In narration and description, the paragraph sometimes begins with a concise, comprehensive statement serving to hold together the details that follow.

> ➢ The breeze served us admirably.

> ➢ The campaign opened with a series of reverses.

The next ten or twelve pages were filled with a curious set of entries. But this device, if too often used, would become a mannerism. More commonly the opening sentence simply indicates by its subject with what the paragraph is to be principally concerned.

> ➤ At length I thought I might return towards the stockade. He picked up the heavy lamp from the table and began to explore. Another flight of steps, and they emerged on the roof.

The brief paragraphs of animated narrative, however, are often without even this semblance of a topic sentence. The break between them serves the purpose of a rhetorical pause, throwing into prominence some detail of the action.

4.3.1.3   Use the active voice

The active voice is usually more direct and vigorous than the passive:

> ➤ I shall always remember my first visit to Boston.

This is much better than:

> ➤ My first visit to Boston will always be remembered by me.

The latter sentence is less direct, less bold, and less concise. If the writer tries to make it more concise by omitting "by me,"

> ➤ My first visit to Boston will always be remembered.

It becomes indefinite: is it the writer, or some person undisclosed, or the world at large, that will always remember this visit? This rule does not, of course, mean that the writer should entirely discard the passive voice, which is frequently convenient and sometimes necessary.

> ➤ The dramatists of the Restoration are little esteemed today.
>
> ➤ Modern readers have little esteem for the dramatists of the Restoration.

The first would be the right form in a paragraph on the dramatists of the Restoration; the second, in a paragraph on the tastes of modern readers. The need of making a particular word the subject of the sentence will often, as in these examples, determine which voice is to be

used. The habitual use of the active voice, however, makes for forcible writing. This is true not only in narrative principally concerned with action, but in writing of any kind. Many a tame sentence of description or exposition can be made lively and emphatic by substituting a transitive in the active voice for some such perfunctory expression as there is, or could be heard.

> There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground.

> Dead leaves covered the ground.

> The sound of the falls could still be heard.

> The sound of the falls still reached our ears.

> The reason that he left college was that his health became impaired.

> Failing health compelled him to leave college.

> It was not long before he was very sorry that he had said what he had.

> He soon repented his words.

As a rule, avoid making one passive depend directly upon another.

> Gold was not allowed to be exported.

> It was forbidden to export gold (The export of gold was prohibited).

In the first example, "to be exported" depends on "was not allowed," to passive structures that create awkwardness as can be seen in the following example:

> ➤ He has been proved to have been seen entering the building.

> ➤ Edited: It has been proved that he was seen to enter the building.

In passive voice, the subject receives the action. In both examples, the second passive "to have been seen entering the building" becomes the subject of the first passive "He has been proved." It is better to write:

> ➤ A witness saw him entering the building

> ➤ A witness proved he entered the building

A common fault in academic writing is to use as the subject of a passive construction a noun which expresses the entire action, leaving to the verb no function beyond that of completing the sentence.

> ➤ A survey of this region was made in 1900.

> ➤ This region was surveyed in 1900.

In the first example, "A survey of this region" becomes a noun. The verb that should have anchored the sentence (survey) is lost in that noun phrase. Instead, the second example uses that verb effectively in a shorted passive sentence. The same changes can be seen in the following examples:

> ➤ Mobilization of the army was rapidly carried out.

> ➤ The army was rapidly mobilized.

> ➤ Confirmation of these reports cannot be obtained.

> ➤ These reports cannot be confirmed.

Compare the sentence, "The export of gold was prohibited," in which the predicate "was prohibited" expresses something not implied in "export."

4.3.1.4   Put statements in positive form

Make definite assertions. Avoid tame, colorless, hesitating, non-committal language. Use the word not as a means of denial or in antithesis, never as a means of evasion.

> ➤ He was not very often on time.
>
> ➤ He usually came late.

> ➤ He did not think that studying Latin was much use.
>
> ➤ He thought the study of Latin useless.

> ➤ The Taming of the Shrew is rather weak in spots.
>
> ➤ Shakespeare does not portray Katharine as a very admirable character, nor does Bianca remain long in memory as an important character in Shakespeare's works.

> ➤ The women in The Taming of the Shrew are unattractive.
>
> ➤ Katharine is disagreeable, Bianca insignificant.

The last example, before correction, is indefinite as well as negative. The corrected version, consequently, is simply a guess at the writer's intention. All three examples show the weakness inherent in the word not. Consciously or unconsciously, the reader is dissatisfied with being told

only what is not; he wishes to be told what is. Hence, as a rule, it is better to express a negative in positive form.

not honest	dishonest
not important	trifling
did not remember	forgot
did not pay any attention to	ignored
did not have much confidence in	distrusted

The antithesis of negative and positive is strong:

> ➤ Not charity, but simple justice.

> ➤ Not that I loved Caesar less, but Rome the more.

Negative words other than not are usually strong:

> ➤ The sun never sets upon the British flag.

4.3.2 The Topic Sentence

A good topic sentence is concise and emphatic. It is no longer than the idea requires, and it stresses the important word or phrase. Here, for instance, is the topic statement which opens a paragraph about the collapse of the stock market in 1929:

> ➤ The Big Bull Market was dead. Frederick Lewis Allen

Notice several things. (1) Allen's sentence is brief. Not all topics can be explained in six words, but whether they take six or sixty, they should be phrased in no more words than are absolutely necessary. (2) The sentence is clear and strong: you understand exactly what Allen means. (3) It places the key word—"dead"—at the end, where it gets heavy stress and leads naturally into

what will follow. Of course, if a topic sentence ends on a key term, it must do so naturally, without violating any rules of word order or idiom. (4) The sentence stands first in the paragraph. This is where topic statements generally belong: at or near the beginning.

4.3.3 Sentences as the Analytic Elements of a Paragraph

The sentences of a good expository paragraph reflect a clear, rational analysis of the topic. Here is a brief example, this one by Bertrand Russell. (The sentences have been numbered for convenience.)

> ➢ [1] The intellectual life of the nineteenth century was more complex than that of any previous age. [2] This was due to several causes. [3] First: the area concerned was larger than ever before; America and Russia made important contributions, and Europe became more aware than formerly of Indian philosophies, both ancient and modern. [4] Second: science, which had been a chief source of novelty since the seventeenth century, made new conquests, especially in geology, biology, and organic chemistry. [5] Third: machine production profoundly altered the social structure, and gave men a new conception of their powers in relation to the physical environment. [6] Fourth: a profound revolt, both philosophical and political, against traditional systems of thought, in politics and in economics, gave rise to attacks upon many beliefs and institutions that had hitherto been regarded as unassailable. [7] This revolt had two very different forms, one romantic, the other rationalistic. [8] (I am using these words in a liberal sense.) [9] The romantic revolt passes from Byron, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche to Mussolini and Hitler; the rationalistic revolt begins with the French philosophers of the Revolution, passes on, somewhat softened, to the philosophical radicals in England, then acquires a deeper form in Marx and issues in Soviet Russia.

Russell's nine sentences correspond to his steps in analyzing his topic:

Sentence Idea

Topic: increasing intellectual complexity

Plan: list several causes

First cause: larger area

Second cause: science

Third cause: machine production

Fourth cause: intellectual revolt

Two forms

qualification

specification of the two forms

Examining whether the sentences of a paragraph correspond with its ideas is a good test of the coherence of the paragraph. The correspondence need not be as exact as in Russell's paragraph (and usually will not be). But if you cannot outline a generally clear relationship, the paragraph is probably confused and confusing. The fact that a paragraph like Russell's reveals a coherent logical structure does not imply that the writer worked from an outline. One can proceed in this way, but in writing of any length an outline is tedious and time-consuming. Experienced writers adjust sentences to thought intuitively, without constantly thinking about when to begin a new sentence. Those with less experience must remain more conscious of the problem. Working up paragraphs from outlines provides good practice. But whether it is consciously thought out or intuitive, a well-made paragraph uses sentences to analyze the subject.

4.3.4 Focus on and placing the main point.

A paragraph should be unified around a main point. The main point should be clear to readers, and every sentence in the paragraph should relate to it. This main point can be emphasized by placing it at the beginning of the paragraph, at the end of the paragraph or at both places—provided you don't simply repeat it. The last sentence of this paragraph doesn't just recall the meaning of the first one, but adds something new:

> ➢ **It seems to me that the safest and most prudent of bets to lay money on is surprise**. There is a very high probability that whatever that astonishes us today in biology will be usable, and useful for us, tomorrow. This, I think, is the established record for science over the past two hundred years, and we should have more confidence in this process. It worked this way for the beginnings of chemistry; we obtained electricity in this manner; using surprise as a guide, we progressed from Newtonian physics to electro-magnetism, to quantum mechanics and contemporary geophysics to cosmology. In biology, evolution and genetics were the earliest big astonishments, but what has been going on the past quarter of a century is simply flabbergasting. **For medicine, the greatest surprises lie still ahead of us, but there are there waiting to be discovered or stumbled over, sooner or later.** –Lewis Thomas, "Medical Lessons from History"

Stating the main point in a lead or topic sentence (or forecasting the main point)

As a rule, you should state the main point of a paragraph in a lead sentence. This is also called the topic sentence — a one-sentence summary that tells readers what to expect as they read on. Usually the topic sentence (highlighted in the following example) comes first in the paragraph.

> *All living creatures manage some form of communication.* The dance patterns of bees in their hive help to point the way to distant flower fields or announce successful foraging. Male stickleback fish regularly swim upside-down to indicate outrage in a courtship contest. Male deer and lemurs mark territorial ownership by rubbing their own body secretions on boundary stones or trees. Everyone has seen a frightened dog put his tail between his legs and run in panic. We, too, use gestures, expressions, postures, and movement to give our words point. — Olivia Vlahos, *Human Beginnings*

In college writing, topic sentences are often necessary for advancing or clarifying the lines of an argument or reporting the research in a field. In business writing, topic sentences (along with headings) are essential because readers often scan for information and summary statements. But not every good paragraph begins with a topic sentence, and in some paragraphs the main point is implied. The lead sentence can do its forecasting in any one of the following ways:

4.3.4.1 Stating the main point

> **Eddie and I had come to the mine earlier that day for adventure**. When we got there, the sun was shining on the remote dunes, stained red with copper sediment. An old, chillingly frank sign warned us "Danger: Keep Out!" …

4.3.4.2 Stating the topic

> **I have grown fond of semicolons in recent years.** The semicolon tells you that there is still some questions about the preceding full sentence; something needs to be added; it reminds you sometimes of Greek usage. It is almost always a greater pleasure to come across a semicolon than a period. The period tells you that is that; if you don't get all the meaning you wanted or expected, anyway you got all the writer intended to parcel out and now you have to move along. *But with a semicolon there you get a pleasant little*

> *feeling of expectancy; there is more to come; read on; it will get closer. – Lewis Thomas, "Notes on Punctuation"*

The lead sentence announces the topic (semicolon) and thus leads up to the main point, which comes at the end.

4.3.4.3   Asking a question

> ➢ **Can you remember tying on your shoes this morning?** Could you give me the rules for when it is proper to call another person by his first name? Could you describe the gestures you make in conversation? *These examples illustrate how much of our behavior is "out of awareness," and how easy it is to get into trouble in another culture.* –Edward Hall

The opening question initiates a series of questions that lead to the main point, which (once again) appears at the end.

4.3.4.4   Setting a new direction

> ➢ … When my father sent love letters to my mother, my grandmother would open and hide them, and when my mother told my parents she was going to marry this man, my grandmother said if that happened, it would kill her.
>
> **No likely, of course.** My grandmother was a woman who use to crack Brazil nuts open with her teeth, a woman who once lifted a car off the ground, when there was an accident and it had to be moved. … --Joyce Maynard.

Here the lead sentence forecasts the main point of the paragraph simply by setting a new direction. The main point of the paragraph is nowhere stated in a topic sentence but is nonetheless clearly implied: my grandmother knows how to survive.

4.3.5 Sticking to the point

Sentences that do not support the topic sentence destroy the unity of a paragraph. If the paragraph is otherwise focused, such sentences can simply be deleted or perhaps moved elsewhere. In the following paragraph describing the inadequate facilities in a high school, the information about the chemistry instructor (highlighted) is clearly off the point.

> ➢ #As the result of tax cuts, the educational facilities of Lincoln High School have reached an all-time low. Some of the books date back to 1990 and have long since shed their covers. The few computers in working order must share one printer. The lack of lab equipment makes it necessary for four or five students to work at one table, with most watching rather than performing experiments. **Also, the chemistry instructor left to have a baby at the beginning of the semester, and most of the students don't like the substitute.** As for the furniture, many of the upright chairs have become recliners, and the desk legs are so unbalanced that they play seesaw on the floor.

Sometimes the solution for a dis-unified paragraph is not as simple as deleting or moving material. Writers often wander into uncharted territory because they cannot think of enough evidence to support a topic sentence. Feeling that it is too soon to break into a new paragraph, they move on to new ideas for which they have not prepared the reader. When this happens, the writer is faced with a choice: Either find more evidence to support the topic sentence or adjust the topic sentence to mesh with the evidence that is available.

4.4 Developing the paragraph

Though an occasional short paragraph is fine, particularly if it functions as a transition or emphasizes a point, a series of brief paragraphs suggests inadequate development. How much development is enough? That varies, depending on the writer's purpose and audience. For

example, when health columnist Jane Brody wrote a paragraph attempting to convince readers that it is impossible to lose fat quickly, she knew that she would have to present a great deal of evidence because many dieters want to believe the opposite. She did *not* write only the following:

> ➤ When you think about it, it's impossible to lose — as many diets suggest — 10 pounds of *fat* in ten days, even on a total fast. Even a moderately active person cannot lose so much weight so fast. A less active person hasn't a prayer.

This three-sentence paragraph is too skimpy to be convincing. But the paragraph that Brody did write contains enough evidence to convince even skeptical readers.

> ➤ When you think about it, it's impossible to lose — as many . . . diets suggest — 10 pounds of *fat* in ten days, even on a total fast. A pound of body fat represents 3,500 calories. To lose 1 pound of fat, you must expend 3,500 more calories than you consume. Let's say you weigh 170 pounds and, as a moderately active person, you burn 2,500 calories a day. If your diet contains only 1,500 calories, you'd have an energy deficit of 1,000 calories a day. In a week's time that would add up to a 7,000-calorie deficit, or 2 pounds of real fat. In ten days, the accumulated deficit would represent nearly 3 pounds of lost body fat. Even if you ate nothing at all for ten days and maintained your usual level of activity, your caloric deficit would add up to 25,000 calories. . . . At 3,500 calories per pound of fat, that's still only 7 pounds of lost fat. — Jane Brody, *Jane Brody's Nutrition Book*

4.4.1 Organization of Sentences

Although paragraphs (and indeed whole essays) may be patterned in any number of ways, certain patterns of organization occur frequently, either alone or in combination:

• examples and illustrations

• narration

• description

• restatement

• process

• comparison and contrast

• analogy

• cause and effect

• classification and division

• definition

These patterns (sometimes called *methods of development*) have different uses, depending on the writer's subject and purpose. The expository paragraph usually contains one topic or common idea and the topic is written in a topic statement, usually at the beginning of the paragraph. A paragraph can contain two topics, or one major topic and one minor topic. The topic statement is concise and emphatic (see Emphasis). It emphasizes the important word or phrase. They should contain no more words than what is necessary. Sometimes the topic sentence can be a question or a fragment that asserts something emphatically ("Have we not had enough of such men?" or "What did Lincoln's Proclamation accomplish?"). The question automatically generates a paragraph. The fragment does not. The pattern of a paragraph could be set up as follows:

1. Topic sentence

2. List several causes

3. Explain First cause

4. Explain Second cause

5. Explain Third cause

6. Fourth cause (stated generally) analyzed in two forms

   a. Qualification

   b. Specification of the two forms

4.4.1.1 Examples and illustrations

Providing examples, perhaps the most common method of development, is appropriate

whenever the reader might be tempted to ask, "For example?". Illustrations support a

generalization or an abstract idea, give a specific example, provide names, ground the assertion

in facts. An illustration paragraph may consist of a number of brief examples. Make sure the

reader understands that examples are examples by either explicitly introducing it with

expressions such as *for example, for instance, an example is, as a case in point*. The words

say, thus, consider, take, suppose may also serve as introduction. When the illustrative function

is obvious, the introduction may be dispensed with.

> ➢ Normally my parents abided scrupulously by "The Budget," but several times a year Dad
>
> would dip into his battered black strongbox and splurge on some irrational, totally
>
> satisfying luxury. Once he bought over a hundred comic books at a flea market, doled out
>
> to us thereafter at the tantalizing rate of two a week. He always got a whole flat of
>
> pansies, Mom's favorite flower, for us to give her on Mother's Day. One day a boy

But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. Illustrations are extended examples, frequently presented in story form. When well selected, they can be a vivid and effective means of developing a point.

> ➢ Part of [Harriet Tubman's] strategy of conducting was, as in all battle-field operations, the knowledge of how and when to retreat. Numerous allusions have been made to her moves when she suspected that she was in danger. When she feared the party was closely pursued, she would take it for a time on a train southward bound. No one seeing Negroes going in this direction would for an instant suppose them to be fugitives. Once on her return she was at a railroad station. She saw some men reading a poster and she heard one of them reading it aloud. It was a description of her, offering a reward for her capture. She took a southbound train to avert suspicion. At another time when Harriet heard men talking about her, she pretended to read a book which she carried. One man remarked, "This can't be the woman. The one we want can't read or write." Harriet devoutly hoped the book was right side up. — Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman*

The main point of the paragraph was to illustrate how she avoided capture.

4.4.1.2 Narration

A paragraph of narration tells a story or part of a story. It is an informative writing style that like description, can entertain or persuade. Its subject is a series of related events – a story – and the goal is to establish the time relationships of the events and to reveal their significance.

The following paragraph recounts one of the author's experiences in the African wild.

> ➢ One evening when I was wading in the shallows of the lake to pass a rocky outcrop, I suddenly stopped dead as I saw the sinuous black body of a snake in the water. It was all of six feet long, and from the slight hood and the dark stripes at the back of the neck I knew it to be a Storm's water cobra — a deadly reptile for the bite of which there was, at that time, no serum. As I stared at it an incoming wave gently deposited part of its body on one of my feet. I remained motionless, not even breathing, until the wave rolled back into the lake, drawing the snake with it. Then I leaped out of the water as fast as I could, my heart hammering. — Jane Goodall, *In the Shadow of Man*

The main point of the paragraph is to narrate her story of adventure in the lake.

4.4.1.3 Description

A descriptive paragraph sketches a portrait of a person, place, or thing by using concrete and specific details that appeal to one or more of the senses — sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Consider, for example, the following description of the grasshopper invasions that devastated the Midwestern landscape in the late 1860s.

> ➢ They came like dive bombers out of the west. They came by the millions with the rustle of their wings roaring overhead. They came in waves, like the rolls of the sea, descending with a terrifying speed, breaking now and again like a mighty surf. They came with the force of a williwaw and they formed a huge, ominous, dark brown cloud that eclipsed the sun. They dipped and touched earth, hitting objects and people like hailstones. But they were not hail. These were *live* demons. They popped, snapped, crackled, and roared. They were dark brown, an inch or longer in length, plump in the middle and tapered at

> the ends. They had transparent wings, slender legs, and two black eyes that flashed with a
>
> fierce intelligence. — Eugene Boe, "Pioneers to Eternity"

Notice how the paragraph applied repetition skillfully to describe the invasion.

Description deals with mostly visual perceptions. Its goal is to arrange what is seen in a significant pattern. When writing up an experiment in biology or engineering, description is necessary. Description is done objectively or subjectively. Objective description is where the writer sets aside those aspects of his perception which are unique to himself and concentrate on describing the object in its own right ("This is how the thing is"). Subjective description results when a writer deliberately projects his feelings into the description, so that readers are made aware of the object not something in itself, but as something being experienced by a particular observer ("This is how it is for me"). Objective description is true in relation to facts, whereas subjective description is true in relation to feeling or evaluation. It is true not because it reports accurately, but because it presents a valuable response. We cannot say that the description is false, only that it is not true for us or we do not share it. Success in writing description hinges on:

Objective Description: Selection of Detail

Which details are essential to seeing and understanding?

Objective Description: Organization of details

The visual kind usually begins with a brief general view, presenting the object is a comprehensive, undetailed image. It then analyzes this into its natural parts and treats each in more detail. Move about the object implicitly without dragging readers by the hand.

> ➤ #As we leave the bird's-eye view and come down for a closer look, we observe that the
>
>   shoreline is ringed with rocks.

> In shape the lake resembles a gently curving S, its long axis is lying almost due north-south. The shoreline is ringed with rocks of all sizes, from huge boulders to tiny pebbles—the detritus of the ice age.

4.4.1.4   Restatement

In its simplest form, restatement is nothing more than repeating the topic idea.

> 1964 threatens to be the most explosive year America has witnessed. The most explosive year.

Sufficiently extended, restatement may provide the substance for the entire paragraph.

> American men don't cry, because it is considered un-masculine to do so. Only sissies cry. Crying is a "weakness" characteristic of the female, and no American male wants to be identified with anything in the least weak or feminine. Crying, in our culture, is identified with childishness, with weakness and dependence.

Repeating is difficult because you must repeat yourself without being monotonous. Another way to repeat effectively is to use the same pattern successively: "Same phrase + different contexts". There are two forms of restatement:

Negative-Positive Restatement

Begin by saying what is not the case, then assert what is.

> I am not thinking of philosophy as courses in philosophy or even as a subject exclusive of other subjects. I am thinking of it in its old Greek sense…

4.4.1.5   Specification

Another special type of restatement is specification, which moves from the general to the particular. Brief specifications are often found within single sentences as a means of giving

substance to an abstraction (italics added):

> ➢ Bound to the production of staples—tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar—the soil suffered from erosion and neglect. Oscar Handlin

A more extended instance occurs in this paragraph about politics in Louisiana. The paragraph develops by specifying all that is included in the phrase "the same political pattern":

> ➢ Throughout the years the same political pattern prevailed. The city dominated the state: New Orleans, the nation's mecca of the fleshpots, smiling in not altogether Latin indifference at its moral deformities, and, like a cankered prostitute, covering those deformities with paint and lace and capitalizing upon them with a lewd beckoning to the stranger. Beyond New Orleans, in the south, French Louisiana, devoutly Catholic, easy-going, following complacently its backward-glancing patriarchs, suspicious of the Protestants to the north. And in central and northern Louisiana, the small farmers, principally Anglo-Saxon; bitter, fundamentalist Protestants, hating the city and all its evil works, leaderless in their disquiet and only vaguely aware that much of what they lacked was in some way coupled with the like-as-like office seekers whom they alternately voted into and out of public life. -- Hodding Carter

While specification resembles illustration, it differs in an important way. An illustration is one of several possible cases. Specification covers all the cases. In the sentence above by Professor Handlin, "tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar" are not simply examples of the staple crops of southern agriculture; they are the staple crops. Similarly, Hodding Carter, beginning with the abstract phrase "political pattern," specifies that pattern in its entirety, rather than citing one or two parts by way of example. It move from general to particular, and repeat an abstract idea not literally but rather by enumerating all that it entails.

> ➢ Bound to the production of staples – tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar – the soil suffered from erosion and neglect.
>
> ➢ Throughout the years the same political pattern prevailed. The city dominated the state: New Orleans, the nation's mecca of the fleshpots, smiling is not altogether Latin indifference at its moral deformities, and, like a cankered prostitute, covering those deformities with paint and lace and capitalizing upon them with a lewd beckoning to the stranger…..

In this passage, the "same political pattern" is restated in more particular terms. It is different from illustration because, instead of providing one from numerous possible cases, specification covers the entire ground implied in the topic idea (e.g., the previous passage specifies that pattern in its entirety).

4.4.1.6   Process

A process paragraph is structured in chronological order. A writer may choose this pattern either to describe how something is made or done or to explain to readers, step by step, how to do something. The following paragraph explains how to perform a "roll cast," a popular fly-fishing technique.

> ➢ Begin by taking up a suitable stance, with one foot slightly in front of the other and the rod pointing down the line. Then begin a smooth, steady draw, raising your rod hand to just above shoulder height and lifting the rod to the 10:30 or 11:00 position. This steady draw allows a loop of line to form between the rod top and the water. While the line is still moving, raise the rod slightly, then punch it rapidly forward and down. The rod is now flexed and under maximum compression, and the line follows its path, bellying out

slightly behind you and coming off the water close to your feet. As you power the rod

down through the 3:00 position, the belly of line will roll forward. Follow through

smoothly so that the line unfolds and straightens above the water. — *The Dorling*

Kindersley Encyclopedia of Fishing

4.4.1.7   Comparison and contrast

To compare two subjects is to draw attention to their similarities, although the word *compare*

also has a broader meaning that includes a consideration of differences. To contrast is to focus

only on differences. This pattern is very popular in academic writing and will be elaborated here.

You need to decide whether to focus on likeness or difference and make it equally clear to your

reader. Topic sentences can help. Whether a paragraph stresses similarities or differences, it

may be patterned in one of two ways. The two subjects may be presented one at a time, as in

the following paragraph of contrast.

> ➢ So Grant and Lee were in complete contrast, representing two diametrically opposed
>
> elements in American life. Grant was the modern man emerging; beyond him, ready to
>
> come on the stage, was the great age of steel and machinery, of crowded cities and a
>
> restless, burgeoning vitality. Lee might have ridden down from the old age of chivalry,
>
> lance in hand, silken banner fluttering over his head. Each man was the perfect champion
>
> of his cause, drawing both his strengths and his weaknesses from the people he led. —
>
> Bruce Catton, "Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts"

Or a paragraph may proceed point by point, treating the two subjects together, one aspect at a

time. The following paragraph uses the point-by-point method to contrast speeches given by

Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and Barack Obama in 2008.

> ➢ Two men, two speeches. The men, both lawyers, both from Illinois, were seeking the presidency, despite what seemed their crippling connection with extremists. Each was young by modern standards for a president. Abraham Lincoln had turned fifty-one just five days before delivering his speech. Barack Obama was forty-six when he gave his. Their political experience was mainly provincial, in the Illinois legislature for both of them, and they had received little exposure at the national level — two years in the House of Representatives for Lincoln, four years in the Senate for Obama. Yet each was seeking his party's nomination against a New York senator of longer standing and greater prior reputation — Lincoln against Senator William Seward, Obama against Senator Hillary Clinton. They were both known for having opposed an initially popular war — Lincoln against President Polk's Mexican War, raised on the basis of a fictitious provocation; Obama against President Bush's Iraq War, launched on false claims that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs [weapons of mass destruction] and had made an alliance with Osama bin Laden. — Garry Wills, "Two Speeches on Race"

> ➢ The difference between a sign and a symbol, in brief …

> ➢ Shakespeare's England and the Athens of Pericles were alike in several ways. …

The next problem is to choose the subject to concentrate on or to treat them equally. For example, when writing about high school and college, there are three possibilities: on high school, college or both. Try not to be so obvious.

> ➢ #In this paragraph I shall be chiefly concerned with high school.

This paragraph sounds too plain. Instead, if you want to concentrate on high school:

> ➢ In many ways high school is like college.

If upon college:

> ➤ In many ways college is like high school

And if upon both:

> ➤ College and high school are alike in many ways

When comparing and contrasting, it's easy to lose focus. Keep the focus on one element.

> ➤ *In the case* of both Lincoln and Wilson the soldiers did their part and so did the Executive, but in each case partisanship and narrow-mindedness wrecked the program. Under Lincoln and Johnson, as under Wilson, there was failure of high-minded unity behind the plan of peace that bore promise of success. *In each case,* instead of needful co-operation, there was stupid deadlock between President and Congress. There was *in each case* a fateful congressional election whose effect was felt down in later years… . *In each case* the President's plan failed.

The next problem is how to organize the comparison and contrast. When comparing two subjects, A and B, it must be done with regard to specific points, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. You can organize in the following way:

A	1
1	A
2	B
3	2
B	A

1	B
2	3
3	A
	B

Proceeding by A and B stresses each subject in its totality. Organizing by 1, 2 and 3 emphasizes specific likeness or dissimilarities.

The next problem is deciding on the units to develop the comparison or contrast. One way is to spend a paragraph or part of a paragraph on one subject and a roughly equal passage on the other. Some writers spend the first half on the pros (or truth) and second (or falsehood) half on the cons.

> ➤ True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise; it arises, in the first place, form the enjoyment of one's self; and, in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few select companions. It loves shade and solitude, and naturally haunts groves and fountains, fields and meadows: in short, it feels everything it wants within itself, and receives no addition from multitudes of witnesses and spectators. On the contrary, false happiness loves to be in a crowd, and to draw the eyes of the world upon her. She does not receive any satisfaction from the applause which she gives herself, but from the admiration which she raises in others. She flourishes in courts and palaces, theaters and assemblies, and has not existence but when she is looked upon. – Joseph Addison

You can also build a comparison or contrast in a series of shorter units, like pairs of sentences, each expressing half the comparison.

> ➢ The original Protestants had brought new passion into the ideal of the state as a religious society and they had set about to discipline this society more strictly than ever upon the pattern of the Bible. The later Protestants reversed a fundamental purpose and became the allies of individualism and the secular state.

Or the contrast may be contained within a single sentence

> ➢ At first glance the traditions of journalism and scholarship seem completely unlike: journalism so bustling, feverish, and content with daily oblivion; the academic world so sheltered, deliberate, and hopeful of enduring products. It is true that both are concerned with the ascertainment and diffusion of truth. In journalism, however, the emphasis falls on a rapid diffusion of facts and idea; in academic work it falls upon a prolonged, laborious ascertainment.

A paragraph does not have to compare or contrast: it can do both. It does not have to maintain one focus: A skillful writer can effectively shift among several.

4.4.1.8 Analogy

Analogy is a special type of comparison in which a second subject is introduced to show a similarity which explains or justifies something about the main topic. Analogies draw comparisons between items that appear to have little in common. Writers can use analogies to make something abstract or unfamiliar easier to grasp or to provoke fresh thoughts about a common subject. In the following paragraph, physician Lewis Thomas draws an analogy between the behavior of ants and that of humans.

> ➤ Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They farm fungi, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into wars, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves. The families of weaver ants engage in child labor, holding their larvae like shuttles to spin out the thread that sews the leaves together for their fungus gardens. They exchange information ceaselessly. They do everything but watch television. — Lewis Thomas, "On Societies as Organisms"

> ➤ I understand that this is a course called "How the Writer Writes," and that each week you are exposed to a different writer who holds forth on the subject. That only parallel I can think of to this is having the zoo come to you, one animal at a time; and I suspect that what you hear one week from the giraffe is contradicted next week by the baboon.

The function of analogy is to translate an abstract or difficult idea into more concrete or familiar terms.

> ➤ Let us suppose that an ichthyologist is exploring the life of the ocean. He casts a net ….. He arrives at two generalizations: (1) No sea-creature is less than two inches long, (2) All sea-creatures have gills. He assumes tentatively that they will remain true however often he repeats it.

In applying this analogy, the catch stands for the body of knowledge which constitutes physical science, and the net for the sensory and intellectual equipment which we use in obtaining it. The casting of the net corresponds to observation; for knowledge which has not been or could not be obtained by observation is not admitted into physical science.

> If you are not simply guessing, you are claiming knowledge of the physical universe discovered in some other way other than by the methods of physical science, and admittedly unverifiable by such methods. You are a metaphysician.

Another function of analogy is persuasion. Rhetorical analogy is never a form of proof, just a "weak form of reasoning", but can be effective devices of persuasion.

> If I saw a venomous snake crawling in the road, any man would say I might seize the nearest stick and kill it; but if I find that snake in bed with my children, that would be another question. I might hurt the children more than the snake....The new territories are the newly made bed to which our children are to go, and it lies with the nation to say whether they shall have snakes mixed up with them or not.

4.4.1.9   Cause and effect

One way to describe cause and effect is to be explicit using "First", "Second", and "Third" causes and question-answer. Another way is to develop the reasons more subtly by leaving the causal relationships tacit. Here the reasons are indicated using "for" in the opening sentence.

> The cult of beauty in women, which we smile at as though it were one of the culture's harmless follies, is, in fact, an insanity, for it is posited on a false view of reality. Women are not more beautiful than men. The obligation to be beautiful ....

A paragraph may move from cause to effects or from an effect to its causes. The topic sentence in the following paragraph mentions an effect; the rest of the paragraph lists several causes.

> The fantastic water clarity of the Mount Gambier sinkholes results from several factors. The holes are fed from aquifers holding rainwater that fell decades — even centuries — ago, and that has been filtered through miles of limestone. The high level of calcium that limestone adds causes the silty detritus from dead plants and animals to cling together

and settle quickly to the bottom. Abundant bottom vegetation in the shallow sinkholes also helps bind the silt. And the rapid turnover of water prohibits stagnation. — Hillary Hauser, "Exploring a Sunken Realm in Australia"

In supporting a topic by reasons you may work with only one, treating it in detail; or you may develop two, three, or more. Here a single reason is used to explain why he built his solitary cabin, but restates it in various ways:

> **I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately**, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life… . I wanted to live deep and such out all the marrow of life …

On the other hand, a writer may choose to discuss several reasons.

> A hundred years ago there was every reason to marry young—though middle-class people seldom did. The unmarried state had heavy disadvantages for both sexes. Custom did not permit girls to be educated, to work, or to have social, let alone, sexual, freedom. Men were free but since women were not, they had only prostitutes for partners. When enforced, the double standard is certainly self-defeating. And, though less restricted than girls shackled to their families, single men often led a grim and uncomfortable life. A wife was nearly indispensable, if only to darn socks, sew, cook, clean, take care of her man. Altogether, both sexes needed marriage far more than now—no TV, cars, dates, drip-dry shirts, cleaners, canned foods—and not much hospital care, insurance, or social security. The family was all-important.

Generally, when arranging the causes, the climactic strategy is best: begin with the least important and conclude with the most important. Effects or consequences are handled much the

same as reasons. Here the topic idea is regarded as causing the consequences discussed in the remainder of the paragraph.

> If the moon were suddenly struck out of existence, we should be immediately appraised of the fact by a wail from every seaport in the kingdom. From London and from Liverpool we should hear the same story—the rise and fall of the tide had almost ceased. The ships in dock could not get out; the ships outside could not get in; and the maritime commerce of the world would be thrown into dire confusion.

It's a good idea to diagram the logical structure

Cause: Growing power of capital

Effect: Strengthened the position of the rich

Effect: Their greater leverage enabled them to increase their advantage by removing those aspects of the medieval economy…

Secondary cause: As kings realized the possibility of using commerce to widen their own power base, they allied with capitalists to destroy all vestiges of medieval society in which power existed independent of the monarchy.

Effect: The political alliance between king and capitalist, each seeking to enhance his own power, overthrew the feudal world and ….

Final Effect: The Modern State

A paragraph may consist of several effects. (It is… . It pollutes … . It causes … . It explodes … . It has ….. .") The repetition of this pattern supports and clarifies the logic. Often causes and consequences are more intimately related. Sometimes a thing is both cause and effect, as when the result you expect an action to have is the reason you perform it.

4.4.1.10 Persuasion

Persuasion seeks to alter how readers think or believe. It may take the form of argument, which appeals to reason, offering factual evidence or logical proof. It may take the form of satire, which ridicules particular follies or evils, or it may be eloquent, appealing to our best ideals. There are two basic kinds of persuasion: rational and non-rational. Rational persuasion is called *argument*. Section 6 The Argument will elaborate further on writing such paragraphs. Here, the argument paragraph is introduced. The non-rational argument has no generic name; it main type are satire, eloquence, and pathos. It appeals not to the intellect but to feeling, whereas argument attempts to prove its point reasonably by using logic or evidence.

Example of rational argument

> ➢ The diet, of course, far worse than any day's menu might suggest in that the quantities available for each person are so small. Seven people took their dinner of 1 ¼ lb. of fish—about 2 ½ oz. for each person including a father who does manual labor and three boys over the age of 7. . .

Example of emotive persuasion

> ➢ The time will come. Someday us poor is going to overrule. We're gonna do it by the help of God we're gonna do it. I believe it. …

In the second passage, the writer has no distance with her subject: she stands in the middle of it.

4.4.1.11 Classification and division

Classification is the grouping of items into categories according to some consistent principle. The following paragraph classifies species of electric fish.

> Scientists sort electric fishes into three categories. The first comprises the strongly electric species like the marine electric rays or the freshwater African electric catfish and South American electric eel. Known since the dawn of history, these deliver a punch strong enough to stun a human. In recent years, biologists have focused on a second category: weakly electric fish in the South American and African rivers that use tiny voltages for communication and navigation. The third group contains sharks, nonelectric rays, and catfish, which do not emit a field but possess sensors that enable them to detect the minute amounts of electricity that leak out of other organisms. — Anne and Jack Rudloe, "Electric Warfare: The Fish That Kill with Thunderbolts"

Analysis refers to developing a topic by distinguishing its components and discussing each in turn. "What parts does my subject have?" Analysis is a kind of dissection.

Division takes one item and divides it into parts. As with classification, division should be made according to some consistent principle.

The following paragraph describes the components that make up a baseball.

> Like the game itself, a baseball is composed of many layers. One of the delicious joys of childhood is to take apart a baseball and examine the wonders within. You begin by removing the red cotton thread and peeling off the leather cover — which comes from the hide of a Holstein cow and has been tanned, cut, printed, and punched with holes. Beneath the cover is a thin layer of cotton string, followed by several hundred yards of woolen yarn, which makes up the bulk of the ball. Finally, in the middle is a rubber ball, or "pill," which is a little smaller than a golf ball. Slice into the rubber and you'll find the ball's heart — a cork core. The cork is from Portugal, the rubber from southeast Asia, the

covers are American, and the balls are assembled in Costa Rica. — Dan Gutman, *The Way Baseball Works*

4.4.1.12 Definition

A definition puts a word or concept into a general class and then provides enough details to distinguish it from other members in the same class. In the following paragraph, the writer defines *envy* as a special kind of desire.

> ➤ Envy is so integral and so painful a part of what animates behavior in market societies that many people have forgotten the full meaning of the word, simplifying it into one of the synonyms of desire. It is that, which may be why it flourishes in market societies: democracies of desire, they might be called, with money for ballots, stuffing permitted. But envy is more or less than desire. It begins with an almost frantic sense of emptiness inside oneself, as if the pump of one's heart were sucking on air. One has to be blind to perceive the emptiness, of course, but that's just what envy is, a selective blindness. *Invidia*, Latin for envy, translates as "non-sight," and Dante has the envious plodding along under cloaks of lead, their eyes sewn shut with leaden wire. What they are blind to is what they have, God-given and humanly nurtured, in themselves. — Nelson W. Aldrich Jr., *Old Money*

In practice, defining is rarely simple. It is further complicated by the many different kinds of definitions, serving different purposes, and using different means.

Nominal and Real definitions

The nominal definition defines words using other more familiar words. The real definition defines things by describing attributes. The former describes the word while the latter describes the entity. You should always be clear whether you are primarily concerned with the word or the

entity, and you must make it equally clear to the reader. Consider the following definition of history:

> ➢ By its most common definition, the word *history* now means "the past of mankind."
> Compare the German word for *history—Geschichte,* which is derived from *geschehen,*
> meaning to happen. *Geschichte* is *that which has happened.* This meaning of the word
> *history* is often encountered in such overworked phrases as "all history teaches" or the
> "lessons of history." --Louis Gottschalk

Professor Gottschalk's is a nominal definition. The essayist G. K. Chesterton, on the other hand, in defining marriage is concerned with the institution and not the word—that is, he is making a *real* definition:

> ➢ Marriage is not a mere chain upon love as the anarchists say; nor is it a mere crown upon
> love as the sentimentalists say. Marriage is a fact, an actual human relation like that of
> motherhood, which has certain human habits and loyalties, except in a few monstrous
> cases where it is turned to a torture by special insanity and sin. A marriage is neither an
> ecstasy nor a slavery; it is a commonwealth; it is a separate working and fighting thing
> like a nation

Other kinds of definition

The purpose of a consensual definition is to tell what people commonly use a word to mean. A stipulative definition is a special meaning given to a word or concept by a writer for a particular purpose. A legislative definition is put forward as what the word ought to mean. An incidental definition is something you must do to get on with your topic.

Definitions can be developed in a variety of ways:

Ostensive definition—to point to it, so the writer uses a picture or diagram.

Genus-species definition—the definiendum (concept being defined) is placed in a genus or class, and then distinguished from other members of that class. So we might define football as a team sport and then showing how it differs from other members of the genus "team sport." Voltaire defines history by setting in into the category "recital of facts"; then, he differentiates it from other members of that class, which he calls "fable."

> History is the recital of facts given as true, in contradistinction to the fable, which is the recital of facts given as false.

Synonymous definition uses synonyms or different words to explain something.

Using illustrations in definition—examples can be useful in definitions, for instance, "heroism" can be defined by citing how a hero acts. Metaphors and similes, which draw a kind of comparison, sometimes help to clarify the meaning of a word or concept. Negative definitions explain something in terms of what it is not such as an antithesis.

> Thrift by derivation means thriving; and the miser is the man who does not thrive. The whole meaning of thrift is making the most of everything; and the miser does not make anything of anything. He is the man in whom the process, from the seed to the crop, stops at the intermediate mechanical stage of the money. He does not grow things to feed men; not even to feed one man; not even to feed himself. The miser is the man who starves himself, and everybody else, in order to worship wealth in its dead form, as distinct from its living form. --G. K. Chesterton

Paired or field definitions use one word or concept that is intimately tied to that of a second (or several). For example, military titles such as captain cannot be understood without reference to

first lieutenant and major—the ranks on either side. In this paragraph a scholar defines the two kinds of source material available to historians:

> ➢ Written and oral sources are divided into two kinds: primary and secondary. A *primary source* is the testimony of an eyewitness, or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the dictaphone—that is, of one who or that which was present at the events of which he or it tells (hereafter called simply eye*witness).* A *secondary source* is the testimony of anyone who is not an eyewitness—that is, of one who was not present at the events of which he tells. A primary source must thus have been produced by a contemporary of the events it narrates. It does not, however, need to be original in the legal sense of the word original—that is, the very document (usually the first written draft) whose contents are the subject of discussion—for quite often a later copy or a printed edition will do just as well; and in the case of the Greek and Roman classics seldom are any but later copies available. --Louis Gottschalk

Another way of getting at the meaning of a word is through its root meaning (the etymology) and the changes that meaning has undergone (the semantic history). In the following paragraph the concept of a university is defined by returning to an older name for the institution and exploring the implications of the term:

> ➢ If I were asked to describe as briefly and popularly as I could, what a University was, I should draw my answer from its ancient designation of a *Studium Generate* or "School of Universal Learning." This description implies the assemblage of strangers from all parts in one spot;—*from all parts;* else, how will you find professors and students for every department of knowledge? and *in one spot,* else, how can there be any school at all? Accordingly, in its simple and rudimental form, it is a school of knowledge of every kind,

consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter. Many things are requisite to complete and satisfy the idea embodied in this description; but such as this a university seems to be in its essence, a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country. John Henry Newman

4.4.1.13 Qualification

Qualification is admitting some limitation to the truth or applicability of the idea. The danger is that the focus of the paragraph may be blurred. It involves at least the appearance of contradiction, but without confusing readers as to the main point. One way to do this is to subordinate the qualification:

> ➢ College football is a semiprofessional sport, although some universities do play a purely amateur game.

Another is to place the qualification first and wind up on the main point

> ➢ Although …., main point

Use qualifying words and phrases—"a few", "in general".

Or if it is expressed in a separate sentence, begin with a word stressing its obviousness and follow it by repeating the major idea. Use "of course", "certainly", "admittedly", "true"

4.5   Make paragraphs coherent

When sentences and paragraphs flow from one to another without discernible bumps, gaps, or shifts, they are said to be coherent. Coherence can be improved by strengthening the ties between old information and new. The ideas must fit together (coherent) and the sentences link so that readers are not conscious of gaps (flow). To be coherent, a paragraph must have relevance—every idea must relate to the topic, and effective order—ideas must be arranged in

a way that clarifies their logic or their importance. There is in addition a negative criterion—inclusiveness, that nothing vital must be omitted.

4.5.1 Relevance – every idea must relate to the topic

A topic sentence makes a promise that the paragraph must fulfill. Do not wander from the topic. No matter how attractive an idea may seem, let it go if you cannot fit it into the topic you have staked out. This paragraph demonstrates poor relevance (numbered for reference):

> ➤ [1] College is very different from high school. [2] The professors talk a great deal more and give longer homework assignments. [3] This interferes with your social life. [4] It may even cost you a girlfriend. [5] Girls don't like to be told that you have to stay home and study home when they want to go to a show or go dancing. [6] So they find some other boy who doesn't have to study all the time. [7] Another way college is different is the examinations …

The paragraph begins will. The main point, established in the first sentence, is to describe how college is different from high school. The second sentence supports it. Then the writer begins to slide away. Sentences 3 and 4 might be allowed if they were subordinated. But 5 and 6 lose contact. Sentence 7 tacitly acknowledges that the writer has wandered, throwing out a long transitional lifeline to haul us back to the topic. This edited version has more relevance.

> ➤ College is very different from high school. The professors talk a great deal more and give longer homework assignments, which interferes with your social life. College examinations, too, are different …

4.5.2 Order of Thought

Relevance alone is not enough to establish coherence. All the ideas in the paragraph can relate to the topic yet be poorly arranged. The order in which the sentences are arranged affects the

coherence of the paragraph. For example, a certain order can take the form of an assertion ("The opposition is indispensable"), followed by the reasoning supporting it ("A statement learns more from his opponents than his supporters. His opponents show him where the dangers are."), and then a return to the original claim in the form of a conclusion by "so" (So if he is wise he will often pray to be delivered from his friends, because they will ruin him). One solution is to place ideas in order of their relative importance. Another perhaps better order is to progress from the least to the most important and concluded with a climactic end. Consider which order best connects with what has gone before or best prepare for what is to come.

4.5.3 Paragraph Flow—Setting up a Master Plan

Coherence belongs to the substructure of the paragraph whereas flow appears in the surface, visible in the words used to connect sentences. The opening of the paragraph makes clear how the paragraph will develop.

> ➢ There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and bestsellers—unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns wood pulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books—a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many—every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back (this man owns books). – Adler

Adler early on indicates his plan ("three kinds") and introduces each aspect of the topic with the appropriate term: "First," "Second," "third." The paragraph can be structured by numbering the parts of the paragraph using numerals or words. But do not overindulge. It creates a sense of

mechanicalness. Limit numbering to one paragraph in a short essay. Readers may also feel that they are in a maze and it may confuse not clarify. To avoid using "First", "Second", is by introducing various aspects of the subject into the topic sentence and then fulfilling the plan by repeating each key term as that aspect is developed.

> ➤ We are controlled here by our confusion, far more than we know, and the American dream has therefore become something much more closely resembling a nightmare, on the *private, domestic*, and *international* levels. *Privately*, we cannot stand our lives and dare not examine them; *domestically*, we take no responsibility for (and no pride in) what goes on in our country; and, *internationally*, for many millions of people, we are an unmitigated disaster. --Baldwin

One way of creating flow, then, is to announce your plan and explicitly fit each unit into that plan. It is not a method confined to single paragraphs. You can use it to organize a portion of a long paragraph (which is what Baldwin does), or expand it to organize a short theme, in which case the units would be individual paragraphs rather than sentences. But it is, as we said, a mechanical mode of organization to be employed with restraint.

By using adverbs, the paragraph avoids mechanically numbering the ideas. These conjunctive or transitional adverbs establish a relationship between the ideas expressed in successive sentences, such as time (*presently, meanwhile, at the same time*); of space (*above, below, in front*); or of logic (*therefore, however, as a result*). Transitional adverbs show the reader the way and what to expect. *However* suggest "contradiction", *in fact* signals "here comes a strong restatement"; *therefore* warns "a conclusion or consequence approaching." One can overuse such words.   Good writers vary considerably the use of *nevertheless, even so, furthermore*.

4.5.4 Linking ideas clearly

Readers expect to learn a paragraph's main point in a topic sentence early in the paragraph. Then, as they move into the body of the paragraph, they expect to encounter specific details, facts, or examples that support the topic sentence — either directly or indirectly. In the following paragraph, all of the sentences following the topic sentence directly support it.

> ➢ **A passenger list of the early years [of the Orient Express] would read like a *Who's Who of the World*, from art to politics.** Sarah Bernhardt and her Italian counterpart Eleonora Duse used the train to thrill the stages of Europe. For musicians there were Toscanini and Mahler. Dancers Nijinsky and Pavlova were there, while lesser performers like Harry Houdini and the girls of the Ziegfeld Follies also rode the rails. Violinists were allowed to practice on the train, and occasionally one might see trapeze artists hanging like bats from the baggage racks. — Barnaby Conrad III, "Train of Kings"

If a sentence does not support the topic sentence directly, readers expect it to support another sentence in the paragraph and therefore to support the topic sentence indirectly. The following paragraph begins with a topic sentence. The highlighted sentences are direct supports, and the rest of the sentences are indirect supports.

> ➢ **Though the open-space classroom works for many children, it is not practical for my son, David**. *First, David is hyperactive*. When he was placed in an open-space classroom, he became distracted and confused. He was tempted to watch the movement going on around him instead of concentrating on his own work. *Second, David has a tendency to transpose letters and numbers, a tendency that can be overcome only by individual attention from the instructor*. In the open classroom, he was moved from teacher to teacher, with each one responsible for a different subject. No single teacher

worked with David long enough to diagnose the problem, let alone help him with it.

Finally, David is not a highly motivated learner. In the open classroom, he was graded "at his own level," not by criteria for a certain grade. He could receive a B in reading and still be a grade level behind, because he was doing satisfactory work "at his own level."

— Margaret Smith, student

4.5.5 Repeating key words

Repetition of key words is an important technique for gaining coherence. To prevent repetitions from becoming dull, you can use variations of the key word (*hike, hiker, hiking*), pronouns referring to the word (*gamblers . . . they*), and synonyms (*run, spring, race, dash*). In the following paragraph describing plots among indentured servants in the seventeenth century, historian Richard Hofstadter binds sentences together by repeating the key word *plots* and echoing it with a variety of synonyms (which are highlighted).

> ➢ **Plots** hatched by several servants to run away together occurred mostly in the plantation colonies, and the few recorded **servant uprisings** were entirely limited to those colonies. Virginia had been forced from its very earliest years to take stringent steps against **mutinous plots**, and severe punishments for such behavior were recorded. Most **servant plots** occurred in the seventeenth century: a **contemplated uprising** was nipped in the bud in York County in 1661; apparently led by some left-wing offshoots of the Great Rebellion, servants **plotted** an insurrection in Gloucester County in 1663, and four leaders were condemned and executed; some discontented servants apparently joined Bacon's **Rebellion** in the 1670's. In the 1680's the planters became newly apprehensive of discontent among the servants "owing to their great necessities and want of clothes," and it was feared they would **rise up and plunder** the storehouses and ships; in 1682

> there were **plant-cutting riots** in which servants and laborers, as well as some planters, took part. — Richard Hofstadter, *America at 1750*

You may have been told that you should never repeat a word or phrase when you write, that you should scour your brain or your thesaurus for synonyms to avoid using a word or phrase again. That is nonsense. If repetition gets out of control, it will soon become monotonous and boring. But selective repetition keeps the eye of the reader on your main point. Repeated words may occur by beginning successive sentences with the same words; to end them in that way; or to open a new sentence with the term or phrase that closed the preceding one. Consider these three paragraphs:

> ➢ Uncontrolled repetition: My favorite *painting* is the *painting* I did of my dog in that *painting* in my den.
>
> ➢ Uncontrolled repetition: If you compare *fly-fishing* with *ice fishing*, you will find that *fly-fishing* is more exciting than *ice fishing*

The repetition in the examples above do not add to the main point or add emphasis to the meaning of the paragraph. These following examples use repetition in effective ways

> ➢ I want her to live. I want her to breathe. I want her to aerobicize.
>
> ➢ A kleptomaniac is a person who helps himself because he can't help himself.
>
> ➢ We know that among the marks of holiness is the working of *miracles*. Ireland is the greatest *miracle* any saint ever worked. It is a *miracle* and a *nexus of miracles*. Among other *miracles* it is a nation raised from the dead.

A special case of repetition involves the use of pronouns and demonstratives. The personal pronouns and such words as *one, another, some, the former, the latter, the first, the second,* and so on link sentences by substituting for an earlier word or phrase. *This* and *that* (along with their plurals) may be employed as true pronouns or as demonstrative adjectives. There is a danger to using *this* and *that* because the connection may not be clear, especially when the antecedent is the whole paragraph, so it is better to use these words as adjectives: "this fact", or "this danger." These are called demonstrative adjectives.

> ➤ The blind in particular seem to be indifferent to climatic extremes… . This
>   insensitiveness to January blasts…. . And that is more than something.

4.5.6 Conjunctive Adverbs

Sentences can be linked by conjunctive (or transitional) adverbs, which indicate relationships between ideas. These transitional adverbs are explained in detail in later sections. This following example uses transitional words answering the claim that metaphor has no place in prose:

> ➤ The truth seems that metaphor too is older than any literature—an immemorial human
>   impulse perhaps as much utilitarian as literary. For there appears little ground for
>   assigning poetic motives to the first man who called the hole in a needle its "eye," or the
>   projections on a saw its "teeth." *In fine,* metaphor is an inveterate human tendency, as
>   ancient perhaps as the days of the mammoth, yet vigorous still in the days of the
>   helicopter. *Why then* should it be banned from prose?

"For.... In fine . . . then" establish the logical framework of the argument:

Assertion   Sentence 1

Reason   "For," sentence 2

Assertion restated   "In fine," sentence 3

Conclusion   "then," sentence 4

Transitional adverbs are best placed at or near the beginning of the sentence. Readers are like people groping down a dark passage, and an important part of the writer's task is to show them the way. Connective words are signal lights telling readers what to expect. *However* flashes, "Contradiction ahead"; *in fact* warns, "Here comes a strong restatement of something just said"; and *therefore,* "A conclusion or a consequence is approaching."

Acquiring a working set of conjunctive adverbs is not difficult. English is rich in them. Just to show some sort of contradiction or opposition, for example, we have *but, however, still, yet, nonetheless, nevertheless, though, instead, on the other hand, on the contrary, notwithstanding, even so,* and the list is not complete. While they show generally the same basic relationship, these words are not exact equivalents. They convey nuances of idea and tone. *Nevertheless,* for instance, is a more formal word than *though.* Because of such slight but important differences in meaning and tone, good writers have ready at hand a number of transitional adverbs. If you can call only upon *but* or *however* you cannot communicate what is implied by *yet* or *still* or *though.*

And and *but* present a special case. Most often they act as conjunctive adverbs, joining words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence. But they can also function adverbially. Sometimes one hears the warning, "Never begin a sentence with *and* or *but."* The fact is that good writers do begin with these words (the italics are added):

> ➤ Is not indeed every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's behoof? *And,* finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? Ralph Waldo Emerson I come finally to the chief defiler of undergraduate writing. *And* I regret to say that we professors

> are certainly the culprits. *And what* we are doing we do in all innocence and with the most laudable of motives. –Willard Thorp

> Natural philosophy had in the Middle Ages become a closed Section of human endeavor. . . . *But* although the days of Greek science had ended, its results had not been lost. –Kurt Mendelssohn

As sentence openers *and* and *but* are very useful. *But* is less formal than *however,* while *and* is less formal and ponderous than *furthermore* or *moreover* or *additionally.* Don't be afraid of initial *ands* and *buts.* But use them moderately

4.5.7 Syntactic Patterning

This means repeating the same basic structure in successive or near-successive sentences, basically reusing the same sentence pattern, involving the iteration of specific words. It often holds together the parts of a comparison or contrast:

> *In bankless* Iowa City eggs sell for ten cents a dozen. *In Chicago*, the breadlines stretch endlessly along the dirty brick walls in windy streets.

> *That New York* was much more dry [non-alcoholic] on Sunday during the summer is true. *That it was as dry* as [Theodore] Roosevelt believed it—"I have, for once, absolutely enforced the law in New York"—is improbable. *That it was dry* enough to excite the citizenry to new heights of indignation is clear. –Henry F. Pringle

Syntactic patterning may be more extensive, working throughout most of a paragraph:

It is common knowledge that millions of underprivileged families want adequate food and housing. What is less commonly remarked is that after they have adequate food and housing they will want to be served at a fine restaurant and to have a weekend cottage by the sea. People want tickets to the Philharmonic and vacation trips abroad. *They want* fine china and

silver dinner sets and handsome clothes. *The illiterate want* to learn how to read. Then *they want education*, and then more education, and then *they want* their sons and daughters to become doctors and lawyers. It is frightening to see so many millions of people wanting so much. It is almost like being present at the Oklahoma land rush, except that millions are involved instead of hundreds, and instead of land, the prize is everything that life has to offer. -- Samuel c. Florman

While reusing the same sentence pattern often involves repeating some words, the similar grammatical structure is in itself a strong connective device. However, you cannot impose such syntactic patterning on just any group of sentences. It works only when the underlying thought is repetitious, as in the example above, where the sentences list a series of rising expectations common to Americans. In such cases the similarity of pattern does what ideally all sentence structure should do: the form reinforces the sense.

4.5.8 Syntactic Patterning-Using List Structure and Chain Structure

Using list structure, chain structure, or a combination of the two, you can develop your paragraphs to ensure their coherence, so that the reader sees a continuous line of thought passing from one sentence to the next.

List structure uses a sequence of sentences with the same basic pattern to develop a general point, which is usually stated in the first sentence. Each sentence is a new item in a list of examples:

> ➢ **There were a diverse group.** *There were* priests *who* had brooded over the problem of a world in eternity and made the startling discovery that a holy mission summoned them away. *There were* noblemen in the great court *who* stared out beyond the formal lines of the garden and saw the vision of new empires to be won … Through the eighteenth century their numbers grew, even more, through the nineteenth. – Oscar Handlin.

Another way of ensuring coherence in your paragraphs is to make your sentences form a chain. As long as each sentence is linked in meaning to the sentence before it, the reader can follow your line of thought.

> ➢ The process of learning is essential to our lives. All higher animals seek it deliberately. They are inquisitive and they experiment. An experiment is a sort of harmless trial run of some action which we shall have to make in the real world; and this, whether it is made in the laboratory y scientists or by fox-cubs outside their earth. The scientists experiment and the cub plays; both are learning to correct their errors of judgment in a setting in which errors are not fatal. Perhaps this is what gives them both their air of happiness and freedom in these activities. – Jacob Bronowski, "The Common Sense of Science"

The sentences in this paragraph are connected like the links in a chain:

Lead sentence: The process of learning is essential to our lives. (links to *it* in the next sentence)

All higher animals seek it deliberately. (*higher animals* links to *they* in the next sentence)

They are inquisitive and they experiment. (*experiment* links to *experiment* in the next sentence)

An experiment is a sort of harmless trial run of some action which we shall have to make in the real world;

and this, whether it is made in the laboratory by scientists or by fox-cubs outside their earth. (Both *scientists* and *cubs* link to both in the next sentence)

The scientists experiment and the cub plays; both are learning to correct their errors of judgment in a setting in which errors are not fatal. Perhaps this is what gives them both their air of happiness and freedom in these activities.

For the writer, the advantage of the chain structure is that each sentence tends to suggest or generate the next sentence. The idea of the process of learning leads to the idea of learners (All higher animals); animals lead to the comment on what they do (experiment); experiment leads to a definition of that term (An experiment is a sort of ….), and so on. When you use the chain structure, you are not free to forget about the topic entirely, but you are free to experiment, to pursue the trail opened up by your own sentences, and even to discover something you did not foresee when you wrote the topic sentence. When Bronoswki started this paragraph with a sentence about the process of learning, did he expect to end the paragraph with a sentence about happiness and freedom?

The following paragraph shows how list structure and chain structure can work together:

> ➤ Going home for the Christmas vacation gave me the chance to see my life at college in a new light. At home, relatives and friends asked me how I like the school and my classmates. I answered most of their questions with one-word responses, but I also questioned myself. Had I made any real friends? Did I like the campus atmosphere? Did I enjoy my courses as well as learn from them? As I thought about these questions, I realized that every one of them had a two-sided answer. I had picked up many acquaintances, but I could not yet call anyone my friend. I liked the general atmosphere of the campus, but disliked its conservative air. I enjoyed my courses, but felt many self-doubts. I had to admit to myself that I had no settled opinion about anything at college. I was still finding my way.

This paragraph uses a chain structure with two lists attached to it—a list of questions and a list of answers:

Lead sentence: Going home for the Christmas vacation gave me the chance to see my life at college in a new light. (*home* links with *home* in the next sentence)

At home, relatives and friends asked me how I like the school and my classmates. (*asked* links with *answered* and *questioned* in the next sentence)

I answered most of their questions with one-word responses, but I also questioned myself. (*questioned* links with *questions and answer* in following sentences)

List of questions: Had I made any real friends?

Did I like the campus atmosphere?

Did I enjoy my courses as well as learn from them?

As I thought about these questions, I realized that every one of them had a two-sided answer.

List of answers: I had picked up many acquaintances, but I could not yet call anyone my friend.

I liked the general atmosphere of the campus, but disliked its conservative air.

I enjoyed my courses, but felt many self-doubts. (*self-doubts* links with *no settled opinion* and *still finding my way* in the next sentence)

I had to admit to myself that I had no settled opinion about anything at college. I was still finding my way.

4.5.9 Using parallel structures

Parallel structures are frequently used within sentences to underscore the similarity of ideas. They may also be used to bind together a series of sentences expressing similar information. In the following passage describing folk beliefs, anthropologist Margaret Mead presents similar information in parallel grammatical form.

> ➤ Actually, almost every day, even in the most sophisticated home, something is likely to happen that evokes the memory of some old folk belief. *The salt spills. A knife falls to the floor. Your nose tickles*. Then perhaps, with a slightly embarrassed smile, the person who

spilled the salt tosses a pinch over his left shoulder. Or someone recites the old rhyme, "Knife falls, gentleman calls." Or as you rub your nose you think, that means a letter. I wonder who's writing? — Margaret Mead, "New Superstitions for Old"

4.5.10 Maintaining Consistency and Using Transitions

Coherence suffers whenever a draft shifts confusingly from one point of view to another or from one verb tense to another. In addition, coherence can suffer when new information is introduced with the subject of each sentence. Transitions are bridges between what has been read and what is about to be read. Transitions help readers move from sentence to sentence; they also alert readers to more global connections of ideas —those between paragraphs or even larger blocks of text. Choose transitions carefully and vary them appropriately. Each transition has a different meaning; if you use a transition with an inappropriate meaning, you might confuse your reader.

> ➤ #Although taking eight o'clock classes may seem unappealing, coming to school early has its advantages. Moreover, students who arrive early typically avoid the worst traffic and find the best parking spaces.

> ➤ Although taking eight o'clock classes may seem unappealing, coming to school early has its advantages. For example, students who arrive early typically avoid the worst traffic and find the best parking spaces.

In the first example, "Moreover" suggests "in addition" whereas, the writer is trying to provide an example of the advantages, not something over and above the advantages. Using "For example" fits this goal.

4.5.11   Sentence-level transitions

Certain words and phrases signal connections between (or within) sentences. Example of these connectors are provided in Section 2 Mechanics and Section 4 Developing Sentences. Frequently used transitions are summarized below:

To show addition	again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, still, too
To compare	also, in the same way, likewise, similarly
To show concession	granted, naturally, of course
To show conflict or to contrast	although, and yet, at the same time, but at the same time, despite that, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, otherwise, regardless, still, though, yet
To emphasize	certainly, indeed, in fact, of course
To give examples or illustrate	after all, as an illustration, even, for example, for instance, in conclusion, indeed, in fact, in other words, in short, it is true, of course, namely, specifically, that is, to illustrate, thus, truly

To summarize or conclude	all in all, altogether, as has been said, finally, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, therefore, to put it differently, to summarize
To show time sequence	after a while, afterward, again, also, and then, as long as, at last, at length, at that time, before, besides, earlier, eventually, finally, formerly, further, furthermore, in addition, in the first place, in the past, last, lately, meanwhile, moreover, next, now, presently, second, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, still, subsequently, then, thereafter, too, until, until now, when
To show place or direction	Above, below, beyond, farther on, nearby, opposite, close, to the left
To indicate logical relationship	If, so, therefore, consequently, thus, as a result, for this reason, because, since

Skilled writers use transitional expressions with care, making sure, for example, not to use *consequently* when *also* would be more precise. They are also careful to select transitions with an appropriate tone, perhaps preferring *so* to *thus* in an informal piece, *in summary* to *in short* for a scholarly essay. In the following paragraph, an excerpt from an argument that dinosaurs had the " 'right-sized' brains for reptiles of their body size," biologist Stephen Jay Gould uses transitions (highlighted) to guide readers from one idea to the next.

> ➢ I don't wish to deny that the flattened, minuscule head of large bodied Stegosaurus houses little brain from our subjective, top-heavy perspective, *but* I do wish to assert that we should not expect more of the beast. *First of all*, large animals have relatively smaller brains than related, small animals. The correlation of brain size with body size among kindred animals (all reptiles, all mammals, *for example*) is remarkably regular. *As we* move from small to large animals, from mice to elephants or small lizards to Komodo dragons, brain size increases, but not so fast as body size. *In other words*, bodies grow faster than brains, *and* large animals have low ratios of brain weight to body weight. *In fact*, brains grow only about two thirds as fast as bodies. *Since* we have no reason to believe that large animals are consistently stupider than their smaller relatives, we must conclude that large animals require relatively less brain to do as well as smaller animals. *If* we do not recognize this relationship, we are likely to underestimate the mental power of very large animals, dinosaurs *in particular*. — Stephen Jay Gould, "Were Dinosaurs Dumb?"

Here are several examples of how transitions are applied in paragraphs:

4.5.11.1 To show time

I had begun to teach *in 1964* in Boston in a segregated school so crowded and so poor that it could not provide my fourth grade children with a classroom. We shared an auditorium with another fourth grade and the choir and a group that was rehearsing, *starting in October*, for a Christmas play, that somehow, never was produced. *In the spring*, I was shifted to another fourth grade class.

4.5.11.2 To show addition

Hill has started two non-profit organizations for urban youth. Furthermore, she has resisted letting commercial success dilute her message, turning down movie offers that she believed would shift attention away from her social and political agenda.

4.5.11.3 To show conflict or contrast

Computers may rival but they can never replace human intelligence. Computers and humans both solve problems through pattern matching. However, computers can only improve their problem-solving abilities by searching patterns more exhaustively, while humans improve by searching more efficiently.

4.5.11.4 To mark the shift from cause to effect

> ➤ The world of religion and philosophy was shocked recently when Henry P. Van Dusen and his wife ended their lives by their own hands. Dr. Van Dusen had been president of Union Theological Seminary; for more than a quarter of a century he had been one of the luminous names in Protestant theology, and was considered a spiritual leader. News of the self-inflicted deaths of the Van Dusens, *therefore*, was profoundly disturbing to all those who attach a moral stigma to suicide and regard it as a violation of God's laws.

4.5.11.5 To compare

> ➤ John Milton was blind when he wrote the greatest of English epics, *Paradise Lost*. *Likewise*, Beethoven was deaf when he composed some of his greatest symphonies.

Marking Numerical Order

This transition is commonly found in academic writing as a way of organizing lists of reasons or effects:

> ➤ A local minimum wage has the potential to benefit the city as a whole. *First*, an adequate increase will raise many families out of poverty, taking them off public assistance rolls. *Second*, higher wages mean more tax revenues for the city, money that can be used to improve our schools, roads, and parks. *Finally*, by raising the standard of living for some, we increase the quality of life for all by reducing the human suffering that leads to division, resentment, and crime.

4.5.12 Paragraph Patterns

Internally paragraphs can be organized in different patterns depending on the goal of the writing:

4.5.12.1 Lineal Paragraph—Moves in a straight line through a series of closely-linked ideas.

> ➤ Sentence 1: Assertion—Pure democracy cannot control factions
>
> ➤ Sentence 2: Reason—In pure democracies a tyranny of the majority is inevitable
>
> ➤ Sentence 3: Result—("Hence") Pure democracies are turbulent and short-lived
>
> ➤ Sentence 4: Conclusion—Political theorists advocating such democracy are wrong

4.5.12.2 Ramifying paragraph—Branch in several directions

> ➤ Sentence 1-3: Assertion—Two modern views of the condition of the medieval peasant
>
> ➤ Sentence 4: Specification—First view: peasants badly off
>
> ➤ Sentence 5: Specification—Second view: peasants relatively well off.

Example of a complicated ramifying paragraph

> Now it is frequently asserted, with women, the job does not come first (1). What (people cry) are women doing with this liberty of theirs (2)? What woman really prefers a job to a home and family (3)? Very few, I admit (4). It is unfortunate that they should so often have to make the choice (5). A man does not, as a rule, have to choose (6). He gets both (7). In fact, if he wants the home and family, he usually has to take the job as well, if he can get it (8). Nevertheless, there have been women, such as Queen Elizabeth and Florence Nightingale, who had the choice, and chose the job and made a success of it (9). And there have been and are many men who have sacrificed their careers for women— sometimes, like Anthony or Parnell, very disastrously (10). When it comes to a choice, then every man or woman has to choose as an individual human being, and, like a human being, take the consequences (11).

The paragraph concedes in the first phase that the complaint that women are not reliable workers because they quit their jobs to get married is true—at least in part—but discusses the reason for its truth in a way as to neutralize the fault.

First Thread

Sentence 1: Assertion—Women do not put the job first.

Sentence 2,3: Restatement—Women do not use freedom wisely. Women prefer marriage to careers.

Sentence 4: Concession—Many women do prefer home and family.

Sentence 5: Reason—The choice of preferring home and family is actually forced upon them.

Sentence 6: Contrast—Men do not have to choose.

Sentence 7: Restatement—Men get both automatically.

Sentence 8: Emphatic statement—("In fact")

Second Thread

Sentence 1: Assertion—Women do not put the job first.

Sentence 9: Contradiction—("Nevertheless") + examples

Sentence 10: Restatement in different terms + examples—Some men have not chosen

Sentence 11: Conclusion ("then")--Men and women choose between careers and marriage as individuals.

4.5.12.3 The Circular Paragraph

The circular paragraph ends where it begins, by repeating its opening assertion.

English spelling is the world's most awesome mess (1). The Chinese system of ideographs is quite logical, once you accept the premise that writing is to be divorced from sound and made to coincide with thought-concepts (2). The other languages of the West have, in varying degrees, coincidence between spoken sounds and written symbols (3). But the spelling of English reminds one of the crazy-quilt of ancient, narrow, winding streets in some of the world's major cities, through which modern automobile traffic must nevertheless in some way circulate (4).

English spelling
a mess

Contrast: Chinese
and other languages

Analogical statement:
English spelling is like
the maze

"But"
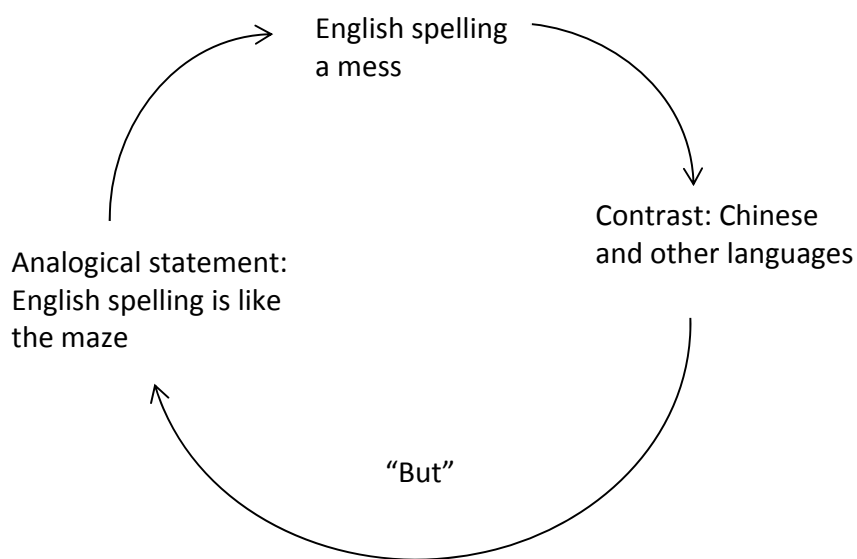
Circular paragraphs are emphatic, making their point both at beginning and ends.

4.5.12.4 The Loose Paragraph

The loose paragraph does not have any controlling predication. It is not as tight as the lineal, ramifying or circular paragraph, but consists of stringing together several predications as the writer returns to the subject to assert new truths about it.

> ➢ The importance of the Roman roads after their makers had gone, lay in this: no one made anymore hard roads in the island until the turnpike movement of the Eighteenth Century. Throughout the Dark Ages and in early medieval times, these stone highways still traversed an island otherwise relapsed to disunion and barbarism. The Roman roads greatly increased the speed of the Saxon, Danish and Norman Conquests, …. . Thanks to the Roman legacy, Britain had better national highways under the Saxon ….. . The imperial stone causeways, often elevated some feet above the ground …. . Gradually the stones subsided ….

The topic of the paragraph is the Roman roads in Britain—the roads, not this or that about them (no predication). As the paragraph develops, particular facts about the road are asserted, but no single proposition unifies and organizes the entire paragraph.

Roman roads in Britain

Assertion 1 – Reason 1 -- Restatement

Assertion 2

Assertion 3

When the purpose is to convey information or ideas, a tight paragraph is better.

4.5.13   Paragraph-level transitions

Paragraph-level transitions usually link the *first* sentence of a new paragraph with the *first* sentence of the previous paragraph. In other words, the topic sentences signal global connections. Look for opportunities to allude to the subject of a previous paragraph (as summed up in its topic sentence) in the topic sentence of the next one. In his essay "Little Green Lies," Jonathan H. Alder uses this strategy in the topic sentences of the following paragraphs, which appear in a passage describing the benefits of plastic packaging.

> ➤ Consider aseptic packaging, the synthetic packaging for the "juice boxes" so many
> children bring to school with their lunch. One criticism of aseptic packaging is that it is
> nearly impossible to recycle, yet on almost every other count, aseptic packaging is
> environmentally preferable to the packaging alternatives. Not only do aseptic containers
> not require refrigeration to keep their contents from spoiling, but their manufacture
> requires less than one-10th the energy of making glass bottles.
> What is true for juice boxes is also true for other forms of synthetic packaging. The use
> of polystyrene, which is commonly (and mistakenly) referred to as "Styrofoam," can

reduce food waste dramatically due to its insulating properties. (Thanks to these properties, polystyrene cups are much preferred over paper for that morning cup of coffee.) Polystyrene also requires significantly fewer resources to produce than its paper counterpart.

A good essay is more than a collection of paragraphs. It is made up of paragraphs linked to each other not only by the substance of what they say but also by the transitions between them. There are several ways to link one paragraph to another:

4.5.13.1 Using a transitional word or phrase

➢ As a young girl I could say anything to my two male friends, and they would know exactly what I meant. My words were never misunderstood. If I asked Shaun to go skating with me, we both knew what it was only a friendly gesture.

Now, *however,* I have to be very careful of what I say to male friends.

4.5.13.2 Transitions between blocks of text

In long essays, you will need to alert readers to connections between blocks of text that are more than one paragraph long. You can do this by inserting transitional sentences or short paragraphs at key points in the essay. Here, for example, is a transitional paragraph from a student research paper. It announces that the first part of the paper has come to a close and the second part is about to begin.

➢ *Although the great apes have demonstrated significant language skills*, one central question remains: Can they be taught to use that uniquely human language tool we call grammar, to learn the difference, for instance, between "ape bite human" and "human bite ape"? *In other words, can an ape create a sentence*?

4.5.13.3 If necessary, adjust paragraph length.

Most readers feel comfortable reading paragraphs that range between one hundred and two hundred words. Shorter paragraphs can require too much starting and stopping, and longer ones can strain the reader's attention span. There are exceptions to this guideline, however. Paragraphs longer than two hundred words frequently appear in scholarly writing, where writers explore complex ideas. Paragraphs shorter than one hundred words occur in business writing and on Web sites, where readers routinely skim for main ideas; in newspapers because of narrow columns; and in informal essays to quicken the pace. In an essay, the first and last paragraphs will ordinarily be the introduction and the conclusion. These special-purpose paragraphs are likely to be shorter than those in the body of the essay. Typically, the body paragraphs will follow the essay's outline: one paragraph per point in short essays, several per point in longer ones. Some ideas require more development than others, however, so it is best to be flexible. If an idea stretches to a length unreasonable for a paragraph, you should divide the paragraph, even if you have presented comparable points in the essay in single paragraphs.

Paragraph breaks are not always made for strictly logical reasons. Writers use them for all of the following reasons.

4.5.13.4 Reasons for beginning a new paragraph

• to mark off the introduction and the conclusion

• to signal a shift to a new idea

• to indicate an important shift in time or place

• to emphasize a point (by placing it at the beginning or the end, not in the middle, of a paragraph)

• to highlight a contrast

• to signal a change of speakers (in dialogue)

• to provide readers with a needed pause

• to break up text that looks too dense

Beware of using too many short, choppy paragraphs, however. Readers want to see how your ideas connect, and they become irritated when you break their momentum by forcing them to pause every few sentences. Here are some reasons you might have for combining some of the paragraphs in a rough draft.

4.5.13.5 Reasons for combining paragraphs

• to clarify the essay's organization

• to connect closely related ideas

• to bind together text that looks too choppy

4.5.14   Advance Paragraph-Level Transitions

Good writers take their reader along as they move in their discussions. Transitions allow the writer to signal clearly when they are changing direction (in subject or emphasis) and how that change connects to the previous discussion.

4.5.14.1 Metabasis (Lead in statement)

Metabasis consists of a brief statement of what has been said and what will follow. It functions as a kind of thought hinge, a transitional summary that link sections of writing together.

> ➢ We have to this point been examining the proposal advanced by …., but now we need to consider the effect it …
>
> ➢ In the previous paragraphs, I have offered….   At this point, I would like to …

Metabasis can be used to show the relationship between preceding material and an example.

> ➢ Now that I have made this catalog, let me give another example of the kind …

It can also be used to sum up large sections of previous material and look forward to further extensive discussion.

> ➢ Now that we have discussed the different kinds of …, we will next examine the architectural …

Example phrases:

> ➢ The discussion above focused on ..It remains for us to examine; It is also necessary to discuss..
>
> ➢ Thus, we have now surveyed…Let us now look at..
>
> ➢ Up to this point, … We should now turn our attention to..

4.5.14.2 Procatalepsis (Anticipating the reader)

This method anticipates an objection that might be raised by a reader and responds to it, thus permitting an argument to continue moving forward while taking into account opposing points. Skillfully used, this device can create almost a conversational effect to an argument.

> ➢ It is usually argued at this point that if….. The answer to this can be found….
>
> ➢ But someone might say that this battle… Such a statement could arise only from …

An objection can occasionally be turned into a further point of support for the writer's argument. Conceding an objection and then turning it into a point in the writer's favor can be a powerful tactic.

> ➤ A powerful objection here is that this new law … This I freely admit and, in fact, is one of its purposes. While the new regulations …, the result will be nearly to eliminate …

While raising an objection from someone later to be revealed as a mistaken or thinking poorly, be very careful not to create a straw man fallacy, where a deliberately weak argument is set up only so that the writer can knock it down. You can lose credibility this way. On the other hand, by mentioning the common and probable objections to your argument, you show that (1) you are aware of them and have considered them in the process of coming to your conclusions, and (2) there is some reasonable response to them It's better to admit that you only have a weak argument, rather than to leave it completely unmentioned.

> ➤ Those favoring the other edition argue… This I admit, and it does seem unfortunate to pay twice.   Nevertheless, this text has …

4.5.14.3 Hypophora (Asking Questions at the beginning)

This device is used to introduce a long paragraph or explanation and helps to maintain interest. It can also be used if you believe the readers will raise such questions or to introduce material of importance the reader might not have knowledge about. Questions also can be used to change direction. One way is to ask all the questions at the same time and then proceed to answer them in a lengthy discussion following.

4.6   Designing documents

The term *document* is broad enough to describe anything you might write in a college class, in the business world, or in everyday life. How you design a document (format it for the printed page or for a computer screen) will affect how readers respond to it.

Good document design promotes readability, but what *readability* means depends on your purpose and audience and perhaps on other elements of your writing situation, such as your

subject and any length restrictions. All of your design choices — formatting options, headings, and lists — should be made with your writing situation in mind. Likewise, visuals — tables, charts, and images — can support your writing if they are used appropriately.

4.6.1 Determine layout and format to suit your purpose and audience.

Similar documents share common design features. Together, these features — layout, margins and line spacing, alignment, fonts, and font styles — can help guide readers through a document.

4.6.1.1   Layout

Most readers have set ideas about how different kinds of documents should look. Advertisements, for example, have a distinctive appearance, as do newsletters and brochures. Instructors have expectations about how a college paper should look. Employers, too, expect documents such as letters, résumés, memos, and e-mail messages to be presented in standard ways. Unless you have a compelling reason to stray from convention, it's best to choose a document layout that conforms to your readers' expectations. If you're not sure what readers expect, look at examples of the kind of document you are producing.

4.6.1.2   Margins and line spacing

Margins help control the look of a page. For most academic and business documents, leave a margin of one to one and a half inches on all sides. These margins create a visual frame for the text and provide room for annotations, such as an instructor's comments or a peer's suggestions. Tight margins generally make a page crowded and difficult to read.

Most manuscripts in progress are double-spaced to allow room for editing. Final copy is often double-spaced as well, since single-spaced text is less inviting to read. If you are unsure about margin and spacing requirements for your document, check with your instructor or consult documents similar to the one you are writing. At times, the advantages of wide margins and

double-spaced lines are offset by other considerations. For example, most business and technical documents are single-spaced, with double-spacing between paragraphs, to save paper and to promote quick scanning. Keep your purpose and audience in mind as you determine appropriate margins and line spacing for your document.

4.6.1.3 Fonts

If you have a choice, select a font that fits your writing situation in an easy-to-read size (usually 10–12 points). Although offbeat fonts may seem attractive, they slow readers down and can distract them from your ideas. For example, using Comic Sans, a font with a handwritten, childish feel, can make an essay seem too informal or unpolished, regardless of how well it's written. Fonts that are easy to read and appropriate for college and workplace documents include the following:

Arial, Courier, Georgia, Times New Roman, and Verdana. Check with the requirements of the journal which may expect or prefer a particular font.

4.6.1.4 Font styles

Font styles — such as **boldface,** *italics,* and underlining — can be useful for calling attention to parts of a document. On the whole, it is best to use restraint when selecting styles. Applying too many different styles within a document can result in busy-looking pages and can confuse readers.

TIP: Never write an academic document in all capital or all lowercase letters. Although some readers have become accustomed to instant messages and e-mails that omit capital letters entirely, their absence makes a piece of writing too informal and difficult to read.

4.6.2 Use headings when appropriate.

In short essays, you will have little need for headings, especially if you use paragraphing and clear topic sentences to guide readers. In more complex documents, however, such as longer essays, research papers, headings are absolutely necessary.

4.6.3 Planning a document: Design checklist for purpose and audience

■ What is the purpose of your document? How can your document design help you achieve this purpose?

■ Who are your readers? What are their expectations?

■ What format is required? What format options — layout, margins, line spacing, and font styles — will readers expect?

■ How can you use visuals — charts, graphs, tables, images — to help you convey information and achieve your purpose?

Headings help readers see at a glance the organization of a document. If more than one level of heading is used, the headings also indicate the hierarchy of ideas — as they do throughout this book.

Headings serve a number of functions for your readers, depending on the needs of different readers. When readers are looking for specific information and don't want to read the entire document, headings can guide them to the right place quickly. When readers are scanning, hoping to pick up a document's meaning or message, headings can provide an overview. Even when readers are committed enough to read every word, headings can help them preview a document before they begin reading or easily revisit a specific section after they've read through the document once.

TIP: While headings can be useful, they cannot substitute for transitions between paragraphs

4.6.4 Phrasing headings

Headings should be as brief and as informative as possible. Certain styles of headings — the most common being *-ing* phrases, noun phrases, questions, and imperative sentences — work better for some purposes, audiences, and subjects than for others. Whatever style you choose, use it consistently. Headings on the same level of organization should be written in parallel structure, as in the following examples from a report, a history textbook, a financial brochure, and a nursing manual, respectively.

4.6.4.1   *-ing* phrases as headings

➢ Safeguarding Earth's atmosphere

➢ Charting the path to sustainable energy

➢ Conserving global forests

4.6.4.2   Noun phrases as headings

➢ The civil rights movement

➢ The antiwar movement

➢ The feminist movement

4.6.4.3   Questions as headings

➢ How do I buy shares?

➢ How do I redeem shares?

➢ How has the fund performed in the past three years?

4.6.4.4   Imperative sentences as headings

➢ Ask the patient to describe current symptoms.

➢ Take a detailed medical history.

➢ Record the patient's vital signs.

4.6.5 Placing and formatting headings

Headings on the same level of organization should be placed and formatted in a consistent way. If you have more than one level of heading, you might center your first-level headings and make them boldface; then you might make the second-level headings left-aligned and italicized, like this:

First-level heading

Second-level heading

A college paper with headings typically has only one level, and the headings are often centered. In a report or a brochure, important headings can be highlighted by using white space above and below them. Less important headings can be downplayed by using less white space or by running them into the text.

4.6.6 Use lists to guide readers

Lists are easy to read or scan when they are displayed, item by item, rather than run into your text. You might choose to display the following kinds of lists:

• steps in a process

• advice or recommendations

• items to be discussed

• criteria for evaluation (as in checklists)

• parts of an object

Lists are usually introduced with an independent clause followed by a colon (*All mammals share the following five characteristics:*).

Periods are not used after items in a list unless the items are complete sentences. Lists should be in parallel grammatical form. Use bullets (circles or squares) or dashes to draw readers' eyes to a list and to emphasize individual items. If you are describing a sequence or a set of steps, number your list with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) followed by periods. Although lists can be useful visual cues, don't overdo them. Too many will clutter a document.

References

This research writing guide gathers materials taken from the following texts and references and uses excerpts from them. Please refer to them for complete guidance.

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Section 5: Clarity and Writing Well

Sentences and paragraphs must be clear and interesting. Clarity means that it says to the reader what the writer intended to say; interesting, that it reads well, attracting us by its economy, novelty, sound, and rhythm. To a considerable degree these virtues are a matter of diction, that is, of word choice; and in the section on diction we shall look at them again from that point of view. But they also depend on sentence structure. In this Section and the next we consider how choice of words and sentence structure contribute to clarity and good writing.

5.1 Causes of Bad Writing

One way of recognizing good writing is to first recognize bad writing. Williams (1990) attributed the start of bad writing to the influence of foreign languages on the English language after the Norman Conquest in 1066 through the impact of the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. Although these influences offered variety in terms of choice of words, they also added what he calls Romance words, that serve only to make the writer sound erudite and learned. As a result, many English writers began larding their prose with exotic Latinisms, which came across as pretentious and certainly incomprehensible to many. Compare these two sentences:

> ➢ The adolescents who had effectuated forcible entry into the domicile were apprehended.

> ➢ We caught the kids who broke into the house.

Another tendency of writers, as societies became intellectually mature, is to replace specific verbs with abstract nouns. Compare how the first sentence in the following example applies nouns (highlighted) instead of verbs, creating a longer and more abstract sentence.

> ➢ The Committee **proposal** would provide for biogenetic industry **certification** of the **safety** to human health for new substances requested for **exemption** from Federal Rules.

> ➢ The Committee **proposes** that when the biogenetic industry requests the Agency to **exempt** new substances from Federal rules, the industry will **certify** that the substances are **safe**.

These abstract Romance nouns result in prose that we call gummy, turgid, obtuse, prolix, complex, or unreadable. George Orwell described turgid language when it is used by politicians, bureaucrats, and other chronic dodgers of responsibility:

> The keynote [of such a style] is the elimination of simple verbs. Instead of being a single word, such as *break, stop, spoil, mend, kill*, a verb becomes a phrase, made up of a noun or adjective tacked on to some general purpose verb such as *prove, serve, form, play, render*. In addition, the passive voice is wherever possible used in preference to the active, and noun constructions are used instead of gerunds (by examination instead of by examining). The range of verbs is further cut down by means of the *–ize* and *de*-formations, and the banal statements are given an appearance of profundity by means of the not *un*-formation.

Unfortunately, academic and scholarly work is full of this kind of bad writing. On the language of social scientists, C Wright Mills note:

> A turgid and polysyllabic prose does seem to prevail in the social sciences … Such a lack of ready intelligibility, I believe, usually has little or nothing to do with the complexity of thought. It has to do almost entirely with certain confusions of the academic writer about his own status.

Some of us feel compelled to use pretentious language to make ideas that we think are too simple seem more impressive. In the same way, others use difficult and therefore intimidating language to protect what they have from those who want a share of it: in power, prestige, and

privilege that go with being part of the ruling class. Another reason we write badly is because we think good writing consists of mimicking the styles that our field promotes as reflected by the characteristic ways of thinking about problems, of making and evaluating arguments. The writer often is unable to manage all these requirements and on top of them, write well. The academic writer ends up juggling several related actions, few of which he entirely understood, and dumps onto the page all the concepts that seemed relevant, expressing them in abstractions loosely tied together with all-purpose prepositions. As a novice in the field, he will try to imitate the field's "professional" prose, which seem to bespeak of membership and authority.

5.2   Good Writing: Concision

Concision is brevity relative to purpose. It is not to be confused with absolute brevity. A sentence of seven words is brief; but if the idea can be conveyed with equal clarity in five, the sentence is not concise. On the other hand, a sentence of fifty words is in no sense brief, but it is concise if the point can be made in no fewer words. Observing a few general rules of sentence construction will help you avoid certain kinds of wordiness.

In these and all following examples, the deadwood—that is, the unnecessary words—are italicized.

> ➢ WORDY #The *fact of* the war *had the effect of* causing many changes.
>
> ➢ CONCISE The war caused many changes.

The main elements of a sentence are its subject, verb, and object. They should convey the core of the thought. Suppose we abstract subject, verb, and object from both sentences:

fact had effect

war caused changes

Clearly the revision—less than half the length of the original—uses the main elements more efficiently: from "war caused changes" a reader quickly grasps the nub of the idea.

But who could guess the writer's point from "fact had effect"?

As you compose a sentence, then, get the essence of the thought into the subject, verb, and object. Not doing so often results from uncertainty about what your subject is. A sentence that starts out on the wrong foot will stagger under a load of excess verbiage as you struggle to get at what you mean:

> ➢ #The first baseman wears a special leather glove that is designed for easy scooping and long-range catching, while the catcher wears a large glove that is heavily padded to protect him from fast pitches.

The subject of the first clause is "the first baseman"; of the second, "the catcher." But these are the wrong subjects: the writer is contrasting the gloves, not the players. If the true subject ("glove") is used, the sentence steps off properly and moves along easily:

> ➢ The first baseman's *glove* is designed for easy scooping and long-range catching, while the catcher's is large and heavily padded to protect him from fast pitches.

5.2.1 Awkward Anticipatory Construction

This is a special case of failing to use the main sentence elements effectively:

> ➢ WORDY *This is* the kind of golfer *that is* called a hacker.
>
> ➢ CONCISE This kind of golfer is called a hacker.

In an anticipatory sentence the notional subject—that is, what the sentence is really about—is not the grammatical subject. A notional subject is a subject which is placed towards the end of a clause, and which is represented by an anticipatory subject (it or there) at the beginning of the clause. The notional subject after anticipatory *it* is always realized by a clause, while the

notional subject following the existential *there is* usually a noun phrase. E.g. (notional subject underlined):

> ➢ It is interesting <u>to learn more about grammar</u>. (To learn about grammar is interesting-if the subject was placed at the beginning)
>
> ➢ There is <u>a new grammar book</u> in the library. (A new grammar book is in the library)

Instead it is introduced (or "anticipated") by a pronoun *(it, this, that, these, those, there)* which functions as the grammatical subject. (The *there-construction* is different grammatically but for all practical purposes works the same way.) A verb like *is, are,* or *seems* links the notional subject to the pronoun, and an adjectival phrase or clause ("it is interesting"), modifying the notional subject, tells us what is being predicated about it:

> ➢ This is the man who witnessed the accident. (*This is* introduces the man)
>
> ➢ There are many property owners who object to new schools.
>
> ➢ Those are the people from Chicago.

Anticipatory constructions require more words than comparable direct statements. Sometimes the construction is legitimized by emphasis or idiom; then the extra words are certainly not deadwood. But unless there is such a purpose, a direct statement is preferable. *Seems* and its close relative *appears* are especially frequent in awkward anticipatory sentences. Some writers, whether excessively cautious or polite, habitually hedge their bets, preferring a hesitant claim like:

> ➢ #It seems that this professor did not prepare his lectures very well.

to the bolder assertion:

> ➢ This professor did not prepare his lectures very well.

About any anticipatory construction, then, ask yourself whether idiom or emphasis justifies it. Sometimes one or the other will. Changing "It is true that we did not like the idea

at first" to "That we did not like the idea at first is true" saves one word but results in a stiff

sentence, too formal for many occasions. Similarly, revising "This is the man who witnessed

the accident" to "This man witnessed the accident" deemphasizes the point, hardly an

improvement if the writer wants to make a strong statement. But sometimes you will find that

no such reason justifies an anticipatory construction. Then it is simply wordy, and you ought to

replace it with a more direct statement.

5.2.2 *Express Modifiers in the Fewest Possible Words*

> ➢ WORDY He acted *in an unnatural* way.
>
> ➢ CONCISE He acted *unnaturally*.

> ➢ WORDY The organization of a small business can be described *in a brief statement.*
>
> ➢ CONCISE The organization of a small business can be briefly described.

> ➢ WORDY She prefers wines *having* a *French origin.*
>
> ➢ CONCISE She prefers French wines.

> ➢ WORDY American exploration was rapid considering the means *which the pioneers had*
>
>   *available to them.*

> ➤ CONCISE American exploration was rapid considering the means available to the pioneers.

> ➤ WORDY The targets that are supplied in skeet shooting are discs made of clay.

> ➤ CONCISE Skeet targets are clay discs.

Adverbs and adjectives ought to link as directly as possible with what they modify. The writers of the first two examples above are afraid of adverbs. (Many people are, perhaps made timid by uncertainty about the -ly ending.) "Unnatural" really describes "acted," but instead of directly connecting it to that verb, the writer hangs it on the empty word "way" in an unnecessary prepositional phrase. Similarly, the adverbial phrase "in a brief statement" can be rendered with equal clarity and far more economy by "briefly." The other three sentences labor under ponderous adjectival phrases or clauses when much briefer construction will do.

5.2.3 Use Participles

Wordy modification often results from failing to use participles.

> ➤ WORDY It leaves us *with the thought* that we were hasty.

> ➤ CONCISE It leaves us *thinking* that we were hasty.

> ➤ WORDY This is the idea *that was suggested* last week.

> ➤ CONCISE This is the idea suggested last week.

In cases like the first example an abstract noun ("thought"), which requires a preposition and an article, can be replaced by one word, "thinking." The second example here shows how to prune an adjectival clause consisting of a relative word ("that") + a linking verb ("was") + a participle

("suggested") or other predicative term. By dropping the relative word and the linking verb, you can move directly from the noun to the participle (or predicative word). Sometimes an entire adverbial clause can be cut back to the operative participle.

> ➢ WORDY *Because they were tired,* the men returned to camp.
>
> ➢ CONCISE Tired, the men returned to camp.

And sometimes an independent clause or sentence can be trimmed to become phrases:

> ➢ WORDY These ideas are already old-fashioned, *and they are not* frequently met with.
>
> ➢ CONCISE These ideas are already old-fashioned, infrequently met with.

Participles can help eliminate expletives.

> ➢ WORDY The women of the settlement would gather together at one home to work on the quilt. *They would* bring their children *with them* and spend the entire day, chatting gaily as they worked.
>
> ➢ CONCISE The women of the settlement would gather together at one home to work on the quilt, bringing their children and spending the entire day, chatting gaily as they worked.

5.2.4 Use Predicate Adjectives

A **predicate adjective** is a subject complement, a word or group of words that follows a linking verb or verb phrase such as is, am, were, smell, feel, taste, look, sound, have been, and did seem. Often writers add words or ideas pointlessly after the predicate adjective as the following examples do.

> ➢ WORDY Riots became frequent *affairs.*
>
> ➢ CONCISE Riots became frequent.

> ➢ WORDY Mr. Martin is a quiet, patient, and cautious *person.*

> ➢ CONCISE Mr. Martin is quiet, patient, and cautious.

> ➢ WORDY The day was a perfect *one.*

> ➢ CONCISE The day was perfect.

"Affairs," "person," and "one" are empty words, hooks on which to hang an attributive adjective. Why not use the adjective predicatively? Then the empty word is no longer needed. And even more important, the adjective will get the emphasis it deserves.

5.2.5 Do Not State What Sentence Structure Itself Makes Clear

5.2.5.1   Use Colon or Dash for Announcement

> ➢ WORDY There were many reasons for the Civil War, *which include* slavery, economic expansion, states' rights, cultural differences, and sectional jealousies.

> ➢ CONCISE There were many reasons for the Civil War: slavery, economic expansion, states' rights, cultural differences, and sectional jealousies.

> ➢ WORDY Pitchers are divided into two classes. *These classes are* starters and relievers.

> ➢ CONCISE Pitchers are divided into two classes—starters and relievers.

In sentences like these, the colon or dash says: "Here comes a series of particulars." If you let the punctuation mark talk, you won't need deadwood like "which include" or "these classes are." (The only difference between the colon and the dash in this function is that the colon is a bit more formal. However, each mark has other, very different tasks in which they are not equivalents.)

The colon or dash can also set up an important idea delayed for emphasis:

> ➤ WORDY But a counterforce has been established within the weapons platoon. This
>
>   *counterforce is* the antitank squad.
>
> ➤ CONCISE But a counterforce has been established within the weapons platoon—the
>
>   antitank squad.

5.2.5.2   Use Ellipses

An ellipsis (plural, ellipses) is the omission of words implied by the grammar but not necessary to complete the sense. The writer using an ellipsis assumes that readers can supply the missing words from the context.

> ➤ WORDY He is taller than his brother *is*.
>
> ➤ CONCISE He is taller than his brother.

Ellipses often secure concision with no loss of clarity or emphasis. They may even enhance those qualities. In the first example above, the sense does not require the second "is"; moreover, the revision allows the sentence to end on the key term "brother."

> ➤ WORDY When you *are* late, you must sign yourself in.
>
> ➤ CONCISE When late, you must sign yourself in.

> ➤ WORDY He lost his wallet; she *lost* her pocketbook.
>
> ➤ CONCISE He lost his wallet; she, her pocketbook.

In the next example, the concise version stresses "late" and avoids repeating "you"; while in the third, dropping "lost" from the second clause makes a striking statement.

The unusual quality of some ellipses, however, limits their usefulness. For example, "He lost his wallet; she, her pocketbook" has a literary flavor that might seem odd in a matter-of-fact, colloquial passage.

5.2.5.3 Use Parallelism

Parallelism means that two or more words, phrases, or clauses are grammatically related in the same way to the same thing. In "The man and the boy came in together," "man" and "boy" are parallel because each acts as a subject of the same verb ("came in"). Or in "She stood and raised her hand," "stood" and "raised" are parallel because each is a verb of the same subject ("She").

> ➢ WORDY These books are not primarily for reading, but *they are used* for reference.
>
> ➢ CONCISE These books are not primarily for reading but for reference.

> ➢ WORDY The beginner must work more slowly, and *he must work* more consciously.
>
> ➢ CONCISE The beginner must work more slowly and more consciously.

Parallelism is like factoring in mathematics; instead of repeating *a* in *2ax + 3ay + az,* the mathematician writes *a(2x + 3y + z).* In a grammatically parallel construction the governing term need not be stated two or three times. In the first example, the phrase "for reference," by being made parallel to "for reading," does duty for the entire second clause. But at times parallelism improves nothing. Emphasis or rhythm often justifies a certain amount of repetition. Thus in the second example above, the so-called "wordy" version would be preferable if the writer wished to stress "he must work."

5.3   Good Writing: Emphasis

In speech we achieve emphasis in a variety of ways: by talking loudly (or sometimes very softly); by speaking slowly, carefully separating words that ordinarily we run together; by altering our tone of voice or changing its timbre. We also stress what we say by non-vocal means: a rigid, uncompromising posture; a clenched fist; a pointing finger; any of numerous other body attitudes, gestures, facial expressions.

Writers can rely upon none of these signals. Yet they too need to be emphatic. What they must do, in effect, is to translate loudness, intonation, gesture, and so on, into writing. Equivalents are available. Some are merely visual symbols for things we do when talking: much punctuation, for example, stands for pauses in speech. Other devices, while not unknown in speech, belong primarily to composition. Some of these we shall look at in this section.

First, though, we need to distinguish two degrees of emphasis—*total emphasis,* which applies to the entire sentence, and *partial emphasis,* which applies only to a word, or a group of words, within the sentence. As an example of total emphasis, consider these two statements:

> ➤ 1. An old man sat in the corner.
>
> ➤ 2. In the corner sat an old man.

Sentence (1) is matter of fact, attaching no special importance to what it tells us. Sentence (2), however, like a close-up in a film, suggests that the fact is important. Now this distinction does *not* mean that the second version is superior to the first: simply that it is more emphatic. Whether or not the emphasis makes it better depends on what the writer wants to say. By their nature strong sentences (that is, those having total emphasis) cannot occur very often. Their effectiveness depends on their rarity. Writing in which every sentence is emphatic, or even every other, is like having somebody shout at you.

Partial emphasis (emphasis within the sentence), however, is characteristic of all well-written sentences. Usually one word (or phrase or clause) is more important than the others. Consider these two variations of the same statement:

> 1. It suddenly began to rain.

> 2. Suddenly, it began to rain.

If we suppose that the writer wished to draw our attention to "suddenly," sentence (2) is better. By moving it to the opening position and isolating it with a comma, the writer gives the word far more weight than it has in sentence (1). Again there is no question of an absolute better or worse. Each version is well-suited to some purpose, ill-suited to others. We start by describing ways of creating total emphasis.

5.3.1 Announcement

An announcement (in the sense it has here) is a preliminary statement which tells the reader, "Watch out, here comes something important":

> Finally, last point about the man: he is in trouble.

The construction receiving the stress should be phrased concisely and vigorously and separated from the preceding announcement by a colon or dash (though sometimes a comma will do).

Anticipatory constructions, which we saw earlier as a potential source of deadwood, can function effectively as a form of announcement. They are low-key, reducing the introduction to little more than a pronoun (or *there)* + a verb:

> This was the consequence we feared. --Evelyn Jones

> It's tragic—this inability of human beings to understand each Other. --Joy Packer

5.3.2 The Fragment

A *fragment* is a construction which, like a sentence, begins with a capital and ends with full-stop punctuation, but which does not satisfy the traditional definition of a sentence. While they are often serious grammatical faults, fragments can be used positively as a means of emphatic statement, drawing attention because of their difference:

> ➤ And that's why there's really a very simple answer to our original question. What do baseball managers really do?
>
> Worry.
>
> Constantly.
>
> For a living. --Leonard Koppett

Going off her diet, she gained back all the weight she had lost. Also the friends.

5.3.3 The Short Sentence

Short sentences are inherently emphatic. They will seem especially strong in the context of longer, more complicated statements. Often the contrast in length reinforces the contrast in thought:

> ➤ As Thompson and the Transcript man had said, Vanzetti was naturally and quietly eloquent. So he was electrocuted. --Phil strong
>
> ➤ Again, it's an incontrovertible fact that, in the past, when contraceptive methods were unknown, women spent a much larger proportion of a much shorter life pregnant, or nursing infants whom they had borne with little or no medical help. And don't believe that that's a natural, a healthy thing for human beings to do, just because animals do it. It isn't. . --Elizabeth Janeway

5.3.4 The Imperative Sentence

At its simplest the imperative sentence is a command:

> ➢ Come here!
>
> ➢ Listen to me!

Its distinguishing feature—usually—is that it drops the subject and begins with the verb, although some commands use a noun of address or an actual subject:

> ➢ John, come here!
>
> ➢ You listen to me!

While commands are rare in composition, imperative sentences can be emphatic in other ways:

> ➢ Insist on yourself; never imitate. --Ralph Waldo Emerson
>
> ➢ Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. --Henry David Thoreau
>
> ➢ Consider, for example, those skulls on the monuments. --Aldous Huxley

Aside from being strong, imperative sentences also link writer and reader. Emerson does not say "men and women must insist on themselves"; he addresses *you.* Thoreau urges *you* to participate in a new way of life, and Huxley invites *you* to look with him at the statuary he is examining. Huxley's sentence also illustrates another use of the imperative: moving readers easily from one point to another.

5.3.5 The Inverted Sentence

Inversion means putting the main elements of a sentence in an order other than subject-verb-object. Some patterns of inversion signal questions ("Are you going into town today?"); some signal condition contrary to fact ("Had I only been there"). Other inversional patterns indicate

emphasis. The most frequent is the sentence that opens with an adverbial word or phrase (to which further modification may be attached) and follows it with the verb and subject:

> ➤ And in one corner, book-piled like the rest of the furniture, stood a piano. --Kenneth Grahame

Less commonly, emphatic inversion follows the pattern object-subject-verb:

> ➤ Wrangles he avoided, and disagreeable persons he usually treated with a cold and freezing contempt. --Douglas Southall Freeman

Inversions are tricky, subject to subtle conventions of idiom, too numerous and complex to bother with here. If you aren't sure whether a particular inverted sentence will work, read it out loud and trust your ear. If it sounds un-English, it probably is.

5.3.6 The Interrupted Sentence

Normally a sentence moves from subject to verb to complement. Interruption breaks that flow by inserting constructions between the main elements and forcing pauses. As we shall see later in this Section, interruption is an important means of emphasizing particular words. But it can also render an entire statement emphatic:

> ➤ And finally, stammering a crude farewell, he departed. --Thomas Wolfe

The sentence could be expressed straightforwardly:

> ➤ And he finally departed, stammering a crude farewell.

But while more natural, the revision is weaker. (Not therefore "poorer"; it depends on purpose.)

Interrupted movement makes demands on the reader, especially when the interrupting constructions grow numerous and long. But kept reasonably short and simple, interruption is an effective technique of emphasis.

5.3.7 The Periodic Sentence

A periodic sentence (sometimes called a *suspended* sentence) does not complete its main thought until the end:

> ➤ If you really want to be original, to develop your own ideas in your own way, then maybe you shouldn't go to college.

It differs from a loose sentence, which places its main clause at the beginning and then adds subordinate ideas:

> ➤ Maybe you shouldn't go to college if you really want to be original, to develop your own ideas in your own way.

Periodic sentences can be constructed in various ways. Many are built by beginning the sentence with adverbials, like the "if"-clause in the example above. Others start off with a noun clause:

> ➤ That John Chaucer was only an assistant seems certain. --John Gardner

> ➤ That the author of Everyman was no mere artist, but an artist-philosopher, and that the artist-philosophers are the only sort of artists I take seriously will be no news to you. --George Bernard Shaw

However they are constructed, periodic sentences make stronger statements than do loose, requiring that we pay attention and suspend understanding until the final words pull everything together. But this type of sentence has limitations. It quickly grows tiresome, for the alertness it demands wearies readers. Furthermore, periodic structure has a formal, literary tone, unsuitable for informal occasions. Yet despite these limitations an occasional periodic sentence supplies valuable emphasis and has the further advantage of varying your style.

5.3.8 The Rhetorical Question

Earlier we saw that rhetorical questions can serve as topic sentences. They can also establish emphasis. Most emphatic rhetorical questions are, in effect, disguised assertions:

> ➤ A desirable young man? Dust and ashes! What was there desirable in such a thing as that? **--** Lytton Strachey

The question says, of course, that he was *not* "a desirable young man." Some emphatic questions are more complicated in meaning, combining an implicit avowal with an actual query:

> ➤ Yet this need not be. The means are at hand to fulfill the age-old dream: poverty can be abolished. How long shall we ignore this under-developed nation in our midst? How long shall we look the other way while our fellow human beings suffer? How long? --Michael Harrington

Even here, however, Harrington is trying not so much to elicit an answer as he is to convince us that allowing poverty to continue is indefensible. (Notice, incidentally, that each of those two examples also contains other kinds of emphatic statement: short sentences, fragments, repetitions.)

5.3.9 Negative-Positive Restatement

Here emphasis is achieved by stating an idea twice, first in negative terms, then in positive:

> ➤ Color is not a human or personal reality; it is a political reality. --James Baldwin

> ➤ This is more than poetic insight; it is hallucination. –J. C. Fumas

> ➤ The poor are not like everyone else. They are a different kind of people. They think and feel differently; they look upon a different America than the middle class looks upon. --Michael Harrington

Generally, the same sentence contains both the negative and the positive statements (as in the first two examples here). In an extended passage, negative and positive may be expressed in separate sentences (the third example).

Less commonly the progression may be from positive to negative, as in this sentence by G. K. Chesterton about social conventions:

> ➢ Conventions may be cruel, they may be unsuitable, they may even be grossly superstitious or obscene, but there is one thing they never are. Conventions are never dead.

All this could be put more briefly:

> ➢ Although conventions may be cruel, unsuitable, or even grossly superstitious or obscene, they are never dead.
>
> ➢ But not put so well.

5.3.10   Rhythm and Rhyme

Rhythm—primarily a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables—is an inevitable aspect of prose, though rarely as regular or as obvious as in poetry. Since rhythm of some sort is inescapable, good writers are aware of it and make it work for them. Probably the most common ways in which rhythm conveys emphasis are by clustered stresses and metrical runs.

A stressed syllable is spoken relatively loudly, an unstressed one more softly. In the following example, stressed syllables are highlighted in bold, unstressed in italics.

A metrical run consists of a number of stressed and unstressed syllables recurring in a more or less regular pattern. This, of course, is common in poetry, but much less so in prose.

5.3.10.1 Clustered Stresses

> ➢ *The* **Big Bull Market** *was dead*. --Frederick Lewis Allen

> ➢ *He* **speaks** *and* **thinks plain, broad, downright**, *English*. --William Hazlitt

Clustering stresses simply means constructing a sentence so that three or four or more stressed syllables occur successively. Obviously such clustering cannot be extensive or frequent.

Done skillfully, as in the examples above, it endows an idea with considerable importance. It can also contribute to meaning in subtle ways. For example, the rhythm of Allen's sentence reinforces the sense of unalterable finality conveyed by "dead."

Metrical Runs

> ➢ *For* **one brief mom***ent the* **world** *was* **noth***ing but* **sea**—*the* **sight**, *the* **sound**, *the* **smell**, *the* **touch**, *the* **taste** *of* **sea.** --Sheila Kaye-Smith

The rhythmic regularity of that sentence not only makes it memorable but also enhances the emotional intensity of the experience.

Like clustered stresses, metrical runs cannot be maintained for very long or employed very often. Otherwise prose begins to sound awkwardly poetic. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that such passages have no place in prose, that prose must avoid any rhythmic effects at all. As we suggested, rhythm is *always* there, but it should be unobtrusive, directing a reader's response, but without drawing attention to itself.

Rhyme

Rhyme, the repetition of identical or very similar sounds, is, like rhythm, a technique we associate more with poetry than with prose. When it does occur in prose it is usually a way of emphasizing particular words within the sentence (we shall see examples later in the Section). Occasionally, however, rhyme serves to unify and emphasize an entire sentence, most

commonly in the form of alliteration (the repetition of successive or near-successive initial sounds):

> ➢ Reason will be replaced by Revelation. --W. H. Auden

5.3.11 Emphasis Within the Sentence

Emphatic sentences are only occasionally needed. But it is usually necessary to establish appropriate emphasis upon particular words within the sentence. Good writers do this subtly. Rather than scattering exclamation points, underlinings, and capitals, they rely chiefly upon the selection and positioning of words.

Differentiate between the emphatic sentence and the emphasis in a sentence.

> ➢ An old man sat in the corner (No emphasis – matter of fact)
>
> ➢ In the corner sat an old man (Emphatic)

Emphatic sentences must occur rarely; their effectiveness hinges on this.

5.3.11.1 Modifiers

Modifiers are an important source of emphasis. A special class called *intensives* do nothing but stress the term they modify: *great, greatly, extremely, much, very, terribly, awfully,* and many, many more. But on the whole intensives are not very satisfactory. They quickly become devalued, leading to a never-ending search for fresh words. Imaginative writers can and do discover unusual and effective ones, as in this description of the modern superstate:

> ➢ These *moloch* gods, these *monstrous* states . . . --Susanne K. Langer

Still it is best not to rely upon intensives as a primary device of emphasis.

5.3.11.2 Pairing and Piling Modifiers

As we shall see in a few pages, adjectives and adverbs can be made emphatic by where they are placed and how they are punctuated. But aside from that, they may be paired and piled up (that is, grouped in units of two or of three or more). Here are a few instances of paired modifiers:

> They [a man's children] are his for a *brief and passing* season. --Margaret Mead

> This *antiquated and indefensible* notion that young people have no rights until they are twenty-one . . . --Evelyn Jones

> [Lady Mary Wortley Montague was like] a dilapidated macaw with a hard, piercing laugh, mirthless and joyless, with a few unimaginative phrases, with a parrot's powers of observation and a parrot's hard and poisonous bite. --Edith Sitwell

Working as a team, paired adjectives impress themselves upon the reader. And they often do more, reinforcing a point by restatement ("a brief and passing season") or suggesting subtle contrasts and amplifications of meaning, as Sitwell's sentence leads us to think about the distinction between "mirth" and "joy" and about how a laugh can be both "hard" and "piercing."

Adjectives may also be accumulated in groups of three or more; as in this description of an Irish-American family:

> . . . a willful, clannish, hard-drinking, fornicating tribe. --William Gibson

Or this one of a neighbor taking a singing lesson:

> A vile beastly rottenheaded foolbegotten brazenthroated pernicious piggish screaming, tearing, roaring, perplexing, splitmecrackle crashmegiggle insane ass.... is practicing howling below-stairs with a brute of a singingmaster so horribly, that my head is nearly off. --Edmund Lear

Passages like these, especially the second, are virtuoso performances in which exaggeration becomes its own end. Of course, exposition cannot indulge itself like this very often.

But sobriety needs relief, and verbal exuberance dazzles and delights. Whatever may be the objective truth of such fusillades of modifiers, they bring us into startling contact with the thoughts and feelings of the writer—that is the essence of communication.

5.3.11.3 Position

Two positions in a clause or sentence are more emphatic than any others—the opening and the closing. Elsewhere emphasis must depend on inversion, isolation, modification, restatement, and so forth. (Of course these techniques may work in harness with positioning to give even greater strength to opening and closing words.)

Opening with key words has much to recommend it. Immediately, readers see what is important. E. M. Forster, for example, begins a paragraph on "curiosity" with the following sentence, identifying his topic at once:

> ➤ *Curiosity* is one of the lowest human faculties.

Putting the essential idea first is natural, suited to a style aiming at the simplicity and directness of forceful speech:

> ➤ Great blobs of rain fall. Rumble of thunder. Lightning streaking blue on the building. --J. P. Donleavy

Donleavy's sentences mirror the immediacy of the experience, going at once to what dominates his perception—the heavy feel of rain, thunder, lightning. (The two fragments also enhance the forcefulness of the passage.)

Beginning (or ending) with the principal idea is advantageous in developing a contrast, which is strengthened if the following clause or sentence opens with the opposing term:

> Science was traditionally aristocratic, speculative, intellectual in intent; technology was lower-class, empirical, action-oriented. --Lynn White, jr.

Postponing a major point to the end of the sentence is more formal and literary. The writer must have the entire sentence in mind from the first word. On the other hand, the final position is more emphatic than the opening, perhaps because we remember best what we have read last:

> So the great gift of symbolism, which is the gift of reason, is at the same time the seat of man's peculiar weakness—*the danger of lunacy*. --Susanne K. Langer

Like the opening position, the closing is also useful for reinforcing contrasts and iterations:

> We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did was "illegal." --Martin Luther King, Jr.

> But Marx was not only a social scientist; *he was a reformer*.--W. T. Jones

Inexperienced writers often waste the final position. Consider, for instance, how much more effective is the revision of this statement:

> As the military power of Kafiristan increases, so too does the pride that Dravot has.

> REVISION: AS the military power of Kafiristan increases, so too does Dravot's pride.

In topic sentences, finally, the closing position is often reserved for the idea the paragraph will develop (if it can be done without awkwardness). Here, for instance, is the opening sentence of a paragraph about Welsh Christianity:

> The third legacy of the Romans was Welsh Christianity. --George Macaulay Trevelyan

5.3.11.4 Isolation

An isolated word or phrase is cut off by punctuation. It can occur anywhere in the sentence but is most common—and most effective—at the beginning or end, positions, as we have seen, emphatic in themselves:

> - *Leibnitz*, it has sometimes been said, was the last man to know everything. --Colin Cherry
>
> - *Children, curled in little balls*, slept on straw scattered on wagon beds. --Sherwood Anderson
>
> - If the King notified his pleasure that a briefless lawyer should be made a judge or that a libertine baronet should be made a peer, the gravest counsellors, after a little murmuring, *submitted*. --Thomas Babington Macaulay
>
> - And then, you will recall, he [Henry Thoreau] told of being present at the auction of a deacon's effects and of noticing, among the innumerable odds and ends representing the accumulation of a lifetime, *a dried tapeworm*. --E. B. white

It is also possible to use both ends of a sentence. See how neatly this sentence isolates and emphasizes the two key terms "position" and "difficult":

The position—if poets must have positions, other than upright—of the poet born in Wales or of Welsh parentage and writing his poems in English is today made by many people nnecessarily, and trivially, *difficult*. --Dylan Thomas

Isolating a word or phrase in the middle of the sentence is less common but by no means rare:

I was late for class—*inexcusably so*—and had forgotten my homework. --Emily Brown

Whether the isolated expression comes first, last, or in between, it must be set off by commas, dashes, or a colon. (As isolating marks, colons never go around words within a sentence;

usually they precede something at the end, though they may also follow an initial word.)

Generally, dashes mark a longer pause than commas and hence imply stronger stress:

"Suddenly—it began to rain" emphasizes the adverb a little more than does "Suddenly, it began to rain." A colon before a closing term is stronger than a comma, but about the same as a dash.

Isolation involves more, however, than just punctuating a word or phrase you wish to emphasize. The isolation must occur at a place allowed by the conventions of English grammar. In the following sentence "Harry" may properly be split from its verb and isolated by an intruding adverbial phrase:

> ➤ Harry, it was clear, was not the man for the job.

But it would be un-English arbitrarily to place a comma between "Harry" and the verb:

> ➤ #Harry, was not the man for the job.

The emphasis gained by isolation—like emphasis in general—does more than merely add strength to particular words: it conveys nuances of meaning. Suppose, for instance, that the sentence by Macaulay quoted above were to end like this:

> ➤ . . . the gravest counsellors submitted, after a little murmuring.

The words are the same and the grammar and the logic, but not the implications. Macaulay, while admitting that the counsellors of Charles II occasionally protested, stresses their submissiveness; the revision, while acknowledging that they submitted, makes their protest more important. In short, the two sentences evaluate the king's ministers differently.

As one final example of how isolation can endow a word with special meaning, read this sentence by Lewis Thomas:

> ➤ There was a quarter-page advertisement in The London Observer for a computer service
>
>   that will enmesh your name in an electronic network of fifty thousand other names, sort

out your tastes, preferences, habits, and deepest desires and match them up with opposite numbers, and retrieve for you, within a matter of seconds, *friends*.

5.3.11.5 Balance

A balanced sentence divides into roughly equal parts on either side of a central pause. Usually the pause is marked by a comma or other stop, though now and then it may be unpunctuated. The halves of a balanced sentence are often independent clauses, but sometimes one will be a dependent clause or even a long phrase. In any case, the two parts must be roughly the same in length and of comparable significance, although they need not be of the same grammatical order.

In balanced construction words are stressed by being positioned so that they are played against one another:

➢ It is a sort of cold extravagance; and it has made him all his enemies. --C. K. Chesterton

➢ Till he had a wife he could do nothing; and when he had a wife he did whatever she chose. --Thomas Babington Macaulay

Chesterton draws our attention to the connection between a "cold extravagance" and making "enemies." Macaulay, playing "do nothing" against "did whatever she chose," comments wryly on the freedom of the married man.

5.3.11.6 Polysyndeton and Asyndeton

Despite their formidable names, polysyndeton and asyndeton are nothing more than different ways of handling a list or series. *Polysyndeton* places a conjunction *{and, or)* after every term in the list (except, of course, the last). *Asyndeton* uses no conjunctions and separates the terms of the list with commas.

Both differ from the conventional treatment of lists and series, which is to use only commas between all items except the last two, these being joined by a conjunction (with or without a comma—it is optional):

> CONVENTIONAL We stopped on the way to camp and bought supplies: bread, butter, cheese, hamburger, hot dogs, and beer.

> POLYSYNDETON We stopped on the way to camp and bought supplies: bread and butter and cheese and hamburger and hot dogs and beer.

> ASYNDETON We stopped on the way to camp and bought supplies: bread, butter, cheese, hamburger, hot dogs, beer.

The conventional treatment of a series emphasizes no particular item, though the last may seem a little more important. In polysyndeton emphasis falls more evenly upon each member of the series, and also more heavily:

> It was bright and clean and polished. --Alfred Kazin

> It is the season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread, whenever the wind blows. --Joan Didion

In asyndeton too the series takes on more significance as a whole than it does in the conventional pattern. But the stress on each individual item is lighter than in polysyndeton, and the passage moves more quickly:

> His care, his food, his shelter, his education—all of these were byproducts of his parents' position. --Margaret Mead

Polysyndeton and asyndeton do not necessarily improve a series. Most of the time the usual treatment is more appropriate. However, when you do wish a different emphasis remember

that polysyndeton and asyndeton exist.

5.3.11.7 Repetition

In a strict sense, repetition is a matter more of diction than of sentence structure. But since it is one of the most valued means of emphasis we shall include it here. Repetition is sometimes a virtue and sometimes a fault. Drawing the line is not easy. It depends on what is being repeated. Important ideas can stand repetition; unimportant ones cannot. When you write the same word (or idea) twice, you draw the reader's attention to it. If it is a key idea, fine. But if not, then you have awkwardly implied importance to something that does not matter very much. In the following examples, of course, we are concerned with positive repetition, involving major ideas.

Repetition may take two basic forms: restating the same idea in different terms (called *tautologia* by Greek rhetoricians) and repeating the same exact word (or a variant form of the same word).

Tautologia

In tautologia the synonyms are frequently stronger than the original term:

> ➤ That's *camouflage*, that's *trickery*, that's *treachery*, *windowdressing*. --Malcolm X

A second term need not be strictly synonymous with the first, and often it is not. Rather than simply restating the idea, the new terms may add shades of meaning:

> ➤ October 7 began as a *commonplace* enough day, one of those days that *sets the teeth on edge with its tedium*, *its small frustrations*. --Joan Didion
>
> ➤ One clings to chimeras, by which one can only be betrayed, and the entire hope—the entire possibility—of freedom disappears. --James Baldwin

In Didion's sentence "frustrations" signifies a worse condition than "tedium," but the ideas relate to the extent that tedium may contribute to frustration. In Baldwin's, "possibility" implies a deeper

despair. Now and then, a writer uses an expression just so he or she can replace it with another:

> ➢ That consistent stance, repeatedly adopted, must mean one of two—no, three—things. --John Gardner

Finally, repetition of an idea may involve simile or metaphor:

> ➢ It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, *like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes*. --George Orwell

> ➢ In [Henry] James nothing is forestalled, nothing is obvious; one is forever turning the curve of the unexpected. --James Huneker

The image contained in a simile or metaphor often both clarifies and emphasizes an idea by translating it into more concrete or familiar terms. Consider Orwell's sentence. (Incidentally, he is paraphrasing a view he does *not* agree with; he believes that abuses of language *should* be struggled against.) We cannot see a "sentimental archaism" (we may not even know what one is). But, familiar with candles and electric light, we can understand that a preference for candles is somehow perverse. And Huneker, practicing the very quality he praises in the novelist Henry James, startles us by the unexpectedness of his metaphor.

Repeating the Same Word

This is a very effective means of emphasis and susceptible to considerable variation. Greek and Roman rhetoricians distinguished about two dozen varieties of verbal repetition, depending on the positions and forms of the repeated terms. For example, the words may begin successive clauses, or end them, or even end one and begin the next; the words may be repeated side by side, or three or four times, or in variant. A simile is a literal comparison commonly introduced by *like* or *as:* Robert Burns's famous line "my luv is like a red, red rose" contains a simile. A

metaphor is a literal identification, as if Burns had written "my luv is a red, red rose." Sometimes metaphors simply use the second term to mean the first: "my red, red rose"="my luv." In ancient rhetoric each pattern had its own learned name. We needn't bother with those here. But you should realize that the patterns themselves are still very much in use. Nor are they used only by writers consciously imitating the classics. They are at home in the prose of men and women who belong to our world and have something to say about it. The patterns of repetition remain vital because we enjoy unusual and clever combinations. Here, then, are some examples of skillful verbal repetition, which not only emphasize important words but also are interesting and entertaining in themselves:

> ➢ To philosophize is to understand; to understand is to explain oneself; to explain is to relate. --Brand Blanshard
>
> ➢ I didn't like the swimming pool, I didn't like swimming, and I didn't like the swimming instructor, and after all these years I still don't. --James Thurber
>
> ➢ When that son leaves home, he throws himself with an intensity which his children will not know into the American way of life; he eats American, talks American, he will be American or nothing. --Margaret Mead
>
> ➢ I am neat, scrupulously neat, in regard to the things I care about; but a book, as a book, is not one of those things. --Max Beerbohm
>
> ➢ Problem gives rise to problem. --Robert Louis Stevenson
>
> ➢ Life is tragic simply because the earth turns and the sun inexorably rises and sets, and one day, for each of us, the sun will go down for the last, last time. --James Baldwin
>
> ➢ She smiled a little smile and bowed a little bow. --Anthony Trollope

> Visitors whom he [Ludovico Sforza, a Renaissance duke] desired to impress were invariably ushered into the Sala del Tesoro, they rubbed their eyes, he rubbed his hands, they returned home blinded, he remained at home blind. ---Ralph Roeder

While the literal meanings of "rubbed" are the same, their implications differ.

> Sforza's guests rubbed their eyes dazzled and amazed by his riches; he rubbed his hands proudly satisfied. Their blindness was a blurring of vision; his, a blindness of spirit.

> The average autochthonous Irishman is close to patriotism because he is close to the earth; he is close to domesticity because he is close to the earth; he is close to doctrinal theology and elaborate ritual because he is close to the earth. --G. K. Chesterton

> Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were brand-new people in a brand-new house in a brand-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new. --Charles Dickens

> If there had never been a danger to our constitution there would never have been a constitution to be in danger. --Herbert Butterfield

This is a frequent pattern of repetition called *chiasmus* or *antimetable.* It involves two terms set in the order *X—Y* in the first clause and in the order *Y-X* in the second.

5.3.11.8 Mechanical Emphasis

Mechanical emphasis consists of exclamation points and of printing or writing words in an unusual way. Italic type is probably the most common method of calling attention to a word or phrase. (In handwriting or typing, the equivalent to italics is a single underline.)

> It is so simple a fact and one that is so hard, apparently, to grasp: *Whoever debases others is debasing himself. --James Baldwin*

> ➢ Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. *It* does not keep the country free. *It* does not settle the west. *It* does not educate. --Henry David Thoreau
>
> ➢ Worse yet, he must accept—how often!—poverty and solitude. --Ralph Waldo Emerson

Other devices of mechanical emphasis include quotation marks, capital letters, boldface and other changes in the style or size of type, different colored links, wider spacing of words or letters, and lineation—placing key words or phrases on separate lines. Advertisements reveal how well all these techniques work.

In composition, however, they work less effectively. An experienced writer does not call upon exclamation points or underlining very often. They quickly lose their value, revealing that one does not know how to create emphasis and so has shouted. Certainly in the examples above the italics and the exclamation point are effective. But in each case the mechanical device merely strengthens an emphasis already attained by more compositional means. Baldwin's sentence puts the key idea last and carefully prepares its way with a colon. Thoreau draws our attention to "it" not only by using italics but by repeating the word at the beginning of three brief, emphatic sentences. And Emerson stresses "how often" more by isolating it than by the exclamation point.

5.4 Good Writing: Rhythm

When things that we see or hear are repeated in identical or similar patterns the result is rhythm. In prose there are two patterns, both involving words, or more exactly the sounds of words. The most obvious is *syllabic rhythm,* consisting of loud and soft syllables. Loud syllables are said to be *stressed* and for purposes of analysis are italicized; soft syllables are *unstressed* and bolded. Writers create syllabic rhythm by arranging stresses and non-stresses in more or less regular patterns, as in:

> ➤ **A** *lucky* **few es**caped **the** *fire.*

The second pattern is *rhythmic intonation.* Intonation is a change in the pitch of the voice, a kind of melody important in speaking. Think, for example, of how many shades of meaning you can give to the words *yes* and *no,* not only by loudness and softness but by altering the rise and fall of your voice. Rhythm based on intonation is created by repeating phrases or clauses of similar construction so that the same "melody" plays several times. Here is an instance from a poem by Alfred Tennyson:

The *long day wanes*; **the** *slow moon climbs*; **the** *deep moans round* **with** *ma***ny** *voi***ces**.

We hear this sentence as a three-part construction with an identical pattern of intonation in the first two clauses. The third repeats the melody in the first four words but varies it in the concluding phrase. Intonational rhythm coexists with syllabic. Thus Tennyson's lines also show an almost perfect alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Finally, a word of caution: there is an inevitable subjective element in rhythm, which is, after all, something we hear. Even sensitive, experienced readers do not all "hear" the same sentence in exactly the same way. We cannot say, however, that rhythm is purely a matter of perception, different for each one of us. Writers can—and good writers do—regulate what their readers hear, not completely, but within fairly clear limits.

5.4.1 Effective Rhythm

Rhythm is effective when it pleases the ear. Even more important, good rhythm enters into what a sentence says, enhancing and reinforcing its meaning. A necessary condition of effective rhythm is that a passage be laid out in clear syntactic units (phrases, clauses, whole sentences);

that these have something in common (length, intonation, grammatical structure); and that

there be a loose but discernible pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Generally, the

syntactic units, while showing some similarities, are very far from exactly the same. Nor are the

syllables laid out in precisely repeated patterns. In this respect prose rhythm is much looser

than that of traditional accented poetry, which has a much more predictable arrangement of

stressed and unstressed syllables. Here are two examples of rhythm in prose:

> **There was a** *ma***gic**, **and** *a spell*, **and** *a curse*; **but** *the magic* **has been** *wav***ed** *away*, **and** *the spell bro***ken**, **and the** *curse* **was a** *curse* **of sleep and** *not* **of pain**. --R. L. Duffus

> **We came** *up* **on the** *rail***way bey***ond* **the ca**n*al*. **It went** *straight* **toward the** *town* **acr***oss* **the** *low fields.* **We could** *see* **the** *line* **of the** *other rail***way ahe***ad of us*. --Ernest Hemingway

Duffus's sentence moves in carefully articulated parts: two primary clauses separated by the

semicolon, and, within each of these, three secondary units marked by commas. Each of the six

units has a similar pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, a pattern regular enough to be

sensed, yet not so relentless that it dominates the sentence, turning it into singsong. In the

passage by Hemingway the basic units are simple sentences. The syllabic rhythm is less obvious

than in Duffus's case, partly because Hemingway's sentences are not further broken up and

partly because the pattern of stresses and non-stresses is a bit more irregular.

5.4.2 Awkward Rhythm

Poor rhythm usually results from either or both of two causes: (1) the sentence is not organized

so that phrases and clauses create a pattern out of which rhythm can evolve; (2) syllables are

poorly grouped, being either so irregular that no pattern at all can be grasped, or so unrelievedly regular that a steady, obtrusive beat overrides everything else. Consider this example of poor rhythm:

> ➤ #Each party promises before the election to make the city bigger and better, but what happens after the election?

There are two problems: first, the initial clause does not break into well-defined groups. This fault can be corrected by changing the position of the adverbial phrase, using it as a sentence opener or as an interrupter, and in either case punctuating it:

> ➤ Before the election, each party promises to make the city bigger and better. . . .

> ➤ Each party, before the election, promises to make the city bigger and better. . . .

Now the clause is organized into potential rhythmic units. The second fault is that the writer has mixed a statement and a question in the same sentence. The different intonations clash, leaving the ear dissatisfied. It would be wiser to place the ideas in separate sentences:

> ➤ Before the election, each party promises to make the city bigger and better. But what happens after the election?

Other improvements might be made. For instance, shortening the question to "But what happens afterwards?" would make it less repetitious and more emphatic. But just as it stands, adding no words and taking none away, our revision shows that poor rhythm can often be improved simply by rearranging the words.

> ➤ #The man was standing on the stairs and far below we saw the boy, who wore an old, unpressed, and ragged suit.

The sentence has one of the same difficulties as the first example: it needs to be divided more clearly (or at least its first two clauses do). But it also has a different problem: its syllabic rhythm is too regular. With one exception the sentence scans as a series of unvaried iambs. The regularity dominates the sentence, obscuring shadings of emphasis.

If the iambic pattern (a unit of two syllables like **ab**ove) is made less relentless the sentence sounds much better:

> ➤ The man stood on the stairs; far below we saw the boy, dressed in an old, unpressed, ragged suit.

The changes—substituting "stood" for "was standing" and "dressed" for "who wore," and replacing two "ands" with a semicolon and a comma—break up the excessive sameness of the syllabic beat. Yet they leave pattern enough to please the ear. Furthermore, the clustered stresses now focus the reader's attention upon key points:

man stood . . . boy dressed . . . old, unpressed, ragged suit

5.4.3 Meaningful Rhythm

Good rhythm enters into the meaning of the sentence, not only reinforcing the words but often giving them nuances they might not otherwise have.

5.4.3.1 Mimetic Rhythm

Mimetic means "imitative." Mimetic rhythm imitates the perception a sentence describes or the feeling or ideas it conveys:

> ➤ The tide reaches flood stage, slackens, hesitates, and begins to ebb. --Rachel Carson

The flowing tide is suggested by the very movement of this sentence, which runs smoothly and uninterruptedly to a midpoint, slows down, pauses (the commas), and then picks up and runs to its end. Here is a similar, somewhat longer, sentence about Niagara Falls:

> ➢ On the edge of disaster, the river seems to gather herself, to pause, to lift a head noble in ruin, and then, with a slow grandeur, to plunge into the eternal thunder and white chaos below.--Rupert Brooke

Mimetic rhythm may also imply ideas more abstract than physical movement, as in this passage describing the life of peasants:

> ➢ Black bread, rude roof, dark night, laborious day, weary arm at sunset; and life ebbs away. --John Ruskin

The six unrelieved stresses at the beginning mirror the dreary monotony of the peasant's existence. Then nonstressed syllables become more numerous and the sentence picks up speed and runs to a close, just as life slips away (in Ruskin's view) from the peasant before he has held and savored it.

5.4.3.2 Metrical Runs

A metrical run is a relatively regular pattern of stresses and non-stresses. This is, of course, a feature of traditional poetry, but not common in prose. It is, as we have seen, a fault when it is not controlled. But used with restraint and skill, metrical runs are effective. Though not specifically meaningful, like mimetic rhythms, they make a sentence memorable and intensify its mood and meaning:

> ➢ I love to lie in bed and read the lives of the Popes of Rome. --Logan Pearsall Smith

This is a story about love and death in the golden land, and begins with the country.-- Joan

Didion

Smith and Didion achieve their metrical runs in part by using prepositional phrases. A typical

prepositional phrase consists of a one- or two-syllable preposition, a noun marker *{a, an, the,*

this, that, and so on), and an object of (usually) one or two syllables. Neither the preposition

nor the marker is stressed, while the object (or one of its syllables) is, so that one of these

metrical patterns is likely:

at *home*

in the *house*

in the *morning*

in the *event*

Such metrical patterns (or "meters") are said to be *rising* since the stress comes at or near the

end. By adding modifiers or doubling the objects of a preposition or stringing together several

phrases, it is possible to sustain a rising pattern over the whole or a portion of a sentence:

about *love* **and** *death* **in the** *gol***den** *land*

> ➢ Sometimes a metrical run occurs at the end of a sentence, bringing it neatly to a close:
> Smoke lowering from chimneypots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it
> as big as full grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death
> of the sun. ---Charles Dickens
>
> ➢ Beyond the blue hills, within riding distance, there is a country of parks and beaches with
> views of the far-off sea. --Logan Pearsall Smith

> There was the sea, sheer under me, and it looked grey and grim, and streaked with the white of our smother

To work at all, metrical runs must be uncommon. Their effect is subtly to draw our attention. Responding unconsciously to the rhythm, we feel that a sentence is important and we are more likely to remember it. Certainly a metrical run will not dignify something silly, but it will help us to think about something important.

5.4.3.3 Rhythmic Breaks

One advantage of maintaining a fairly regular rhythm is that you can alter it for special effect:

> **The** *ro***ses have fa**ded at Mal**mai**son, *nipped* **by the** *frost*. -Amy Lowell

There are four rising meters up to the comma, then an unexpected stress upon "nipped," which throws great weight upon that word, making it the center of the sentence. And it is a key word, for the sentence alludes to the sad story of Josephine, Napoleon's first wife, who was divorced by him for political reasons and who retired to her palatial home of Malmaison, famous for its roses.

And look, finally, once again at the sentence by Logan Pearsall Smith, quoted above:

> Beyond the blue hills, within riding distance, there is a country of parks and beaches with views of the far-off sea.

The rising meters which run throughout most of the sentence abruptly change at the end to three clustered stresses, making the "far-off sea" the climax of the vision.

5.4.4 Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of sounds in positions close enough to be noticed. It is not an aspect of rhythm; even so we shall glance at it. We associate rhyme chiefly with poetry, especially in the form of end rhyme—the closing of successive or alternate lines with the same sound:

> ➤ The grave's a fine and private place,
>
> ➤ But none, I think, do there embrace. --Andrew Marveil

Poetry also often uses inner rhyme—repeating sounds within a line, as with the *a* and *i* vowels and the *p's* of Marvell's first line.

Despite its association with poetry, rhyme occurs in prose, usually as inner rhyme (prose writers rarely end sentences or clauses with the same sound). Like rhythm, rhyme can affect the ear both pleasantly and unpleasantly, and it can enhance meaning.

It seems unlikely that sounds have inherent, culture-free significance in themselves. Particular sounds may acquire loose meanings; for example, we seem to associate the *ee* sound with smallness *(teeny, weeny).* But psychologists who have studied this phenomenon think that such "meanings" are culturally conditioned and will vary from one group to another.

Even if language sounds do not possess inherent universal meanings, it remains the fact that within a particular culture certain sounds can evoke particular attitudes. Even here, however, one must be careful in talking about "meaning." Such meaning is broad and resists precise interpretation. In the following description by Mark Twain of a town on the Mississippi, the frequent / sounds, the s's, the *m's,* and the *n's probably contribute to the sense of peace and*

quiet. Words like lull, lullaby, loll, slow, silent, ssh, shush, and *hush* have conditioned us to associate those sounds with quietness. But that is about all we can say.

> ➤ After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning; the streets empty or pretty nearly so; one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water Street stores, with their splintbottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with shingle shavings enough around to show what broke them down; a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds; two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee"; a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them; two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf, but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them; the great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun; the "point" above the town, and the "point" below, bounding the river-glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one.

If we do not insist upon interpreting their "meaning" too exactly, then, it is fair to say that sounds can convey or reinforce certain moods. They may also contribute to meaning in another, less direct way. By rhyming key words, writers draw attention to them. Here, for instance, Virginia Woolf intensifies an image by repeating 5 sounds and by the alliteration of the *h's* and the *c's:*

> ➤ Dust swirls down the avenue, hisses and hurries like erected cobras round the corners.

And in the following case the writer emphasizes "wilderness" by repeating *w* and "decay" by repeating *d:*

> ➢ Otherwise the place is bleakly uninteresting; a wilderness of windswept grasses and sinewy weeds waving away from a thin beach ever speckled with drift and decaying things—worm-ridden timbers, dead porpoises. --Lafcadio Heam

Yet prose rhyme is risky. Hearn succeeds, but the alliteration (and other rhyme) in these passages seems a bit much:

> ➢ Her eyes were full of proud and passionless lust after gold and blood; her hair, close and curled, seems ready to shudder in sunder and divide into snakes. --Algernon Charles Swinburne
>
> ➢ His boots are tight, the sun is hot, and he may be shot. --Amy Lowell

Excesses like this have led some people to damn and blast all rhyme in prose. Undoubtedly a little goes a long way. But it 1 does have a place. The trick is to keep the rhyme unobtrusive, • so that it directs our responses without our being aware of its influence. Certain things should be avoided: obvious and jingling rhyme or inadvertent repetitions of sound that draw attention to unimportant words. More positively, rhyme pleases the ear and makes us more receptive to what the sentence says, as in this passage by John Donne (a seventeenth century poet who also wrote great prose):

> ➢ One dieth at his full strength, being wholly at ease, and in quiet, and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eats with pleasure; but they lie down alike in the dust and the worm covers them.

Thus rhyme is—or can be—a positive element in prose. It is less important, and less common, than rhythm, but it is far from negligible. Too great a concern with sound, too much "tone painting," is a fault in prose (in poetry too, for that matter). Controlled by a sensitive ear, however, the sounds of a sentence can enrich its meaning.

5.5 Good Writing: Variety

> ➢ The Art Cinema is a movie theater in Hartford. Its specialty is showing foreign films. The theater is rated quite high as to the movies it shows. The movies are considered to be good art.
>
> ➢ The Smith disclosures shocked [President] Harding not into political housecleaning but into personal reform. The White House poker parties were abandoned. He told his intimates that he was "off liquor." Nan Britton [Harding's mistress] had already been banished to Europe. His nerve was shaken. He lost his taste for revelry. The plans for the Alaska trip were radically revised. Instead of an itinerant whoopee, it was now to be a serious political mission. --Samuel Hopkins Adams

Both of those passages consist chiefly of short, simple sentences. The first uses them poorly, the second effectively. Where does the difference lie? The first writer has not grasped the twin principles of recurrence and variety which govern sentence style. Adams, a professional author, understands them very well. *Recurrence* means repeating a basic sentence pattern. *Variety* means changing the pattern. Paradoxical as it sounds, good sentence style must do both. Enough sameness must appear in the sentences to make the writing seem all of a piece; enough difference to create interest. How much recurrence, how much variety depend on subject and purpose. For instance, when you repeat the same point or develop a series of

parallel ideas, the similarity of subject justifies—and is enhanced by—similarity of sentence structure.

Thus Adams repeats the same pattern in his second through seventh sentences because they have much the same content, detailing the steps President Harding took to divert the scandal threatening his administration. Here the recurrent style evolves from the subject. In the other passage, however, the writer makes no such connection between style and subject, and so the recurrence seems awkward and monotonous. The ideas expressed in the separate sentences are not of the same order of value. For example, the fact that the theater is in Hartford is less important than that it shows foreign films. The sentence style, in other words, does not reinforce the writer's ideas; it obscures them. Nor has the writer offered any relief from his short, straightforward statements. Adams has. Moreover, Adams uses variety effectively to structure his paragraph, opening with a relatively long sentence, which, though grammatically simple, is complicated by the correlative " not . . . but" construction. And he closes the paragraph by beginning a sentence, for the first time, with something other than the subject.

Adams's brief sentences work because the subject justifies them and because they are sufficiently varied. Lacking similar justification or relief, the four sentences of the first passage are ineffective. They could be improved easily:

> ➤ The Art Cinema, a movie theater in Hartford, specializes in foreign films. It is noted for the high quality of its films; in fact, many people consider them good art.

There is still recurrence: in effect the passage consists of three similar short clauses plus an appositive. But now there is more variety. In the first sentence an appositive interrupts subject

and verb; in the second there are two clauses instead of one, the latter opening with the phrase "in fact." Subordinating the information about Hartford also keeps the focus where it belongs, on the films. Of course, in composing a sentence that differs from others, a writer is more concerned with emphasis than with variety. But if it is usually a by-product, variety is nonetheless important, an essential condition of interesting, readable prose. Let us consider, then, a few ways in which variety may be attained.

5.5.1 Changing Sentence Length and Pattern

> ➢ From the beginning she had known what she wanted, and proceeded single-minded, with the force of a steam engine towards her goal. There was never a moment's doubt or regret. She wanted the East; and from the moment she set eyes on Richard Burton, with his dark Arabic face, his "questing panther eyes," he was, for her, that lodestar East, the embodiment of all her thoughts. Man and land were identified. – Lesley Blanch

It is not necessary, or even desirable, to maintain a strict alternation of long and short statements. You need only an occasional brief sentence to change the pace of predominately long ones, or a long sentence now and then in a passage composed chiefly of short ones:

> ➢ We took a hair-raising taxi ride into the city. The rush-hour traffic of Bombay is a nightmare—not from dementia, as in Tokyo; nor from exuberance, as in Rome; not from malice, as in Paris; it is a chaos rooted in years of practiced confusion, absentmindedness, selfishness, inertia, and an incomplete understanding of mechanics. There are no discernible rules. --James Cameron

> ➢ Dave Beck was hurt. Dave Beck was indignant. He took the fifth amendment when he was questioned and was forced off the executive board of the AFL-CIO, but he retained

enough control of his own union treasury to hire a stockade of lawyers to protect him. Prosecution dragged in the courts. Convictions were appealed. Delay. --John Dos Passos

Sometimes variation in length can be used to emphasize a key idea. In the following passage the historian Herbert Butterfield moves through two long sentences (the second a bit shorter than the first) to a strong short statement:

> The Whig historian is interested in discovering agency in history, even where in this way he must avow it only implicit. It is characteristic of his method that he should be interested in the agency rather than in the process. And this is how he achieves his simplification.

5.5.2 Fragments

Fragments, usually a special kind of short sentence, make for effective variation—easy to see and easy to use (italics highlight the fragments in the next examples):

> Sam steals like this because he is a thief. *Not a big thief.* He tried to be a big thief once and everybody got mad at him and made him go away to jail. He is strictly a small thief, and he only steals for his restaurant. --Jimmy Breslin

> Examinations tend to make me merry, often seeming to me to be some kind of private game, some secret ritual compulsively played by professors and the institution. I invariably become facetious in all the critical hours. *All that solemnity for a few facts!* I couldn't believe they were serious. I never quite understood it. --Mary Caroline Richards

Used with restraint, fragments like these are a simple way to vary your sentences. They are, however, more at home in a colloquial style than in a formal one.

5.5.3 Rhetorical Questions

Like fragments or any other kind of unusual sentence, rhetorical questions are rarely used for variety alone. Their primary purpose is to emphasize a point or to set up a topic for discussion. Still, whenever they are employed for such ends, they are also a source of variety:

> ➢ But Toronto—Toronto is the subject. One must say something— what must one say about Toronto? What can one? What has anybody ever said? It is impossible to give it anything but commendation. It is not squalid like Birmingham, or cramped like Canton, or scattered like Edmonton, or sham like Berlin, or hellish like New York, or tiresome like Nice. It is all right. The only depressing thing is that it will always be what it is, only larger, and that no Canadian city can ever be anything better or different. If they are good they may become Toronto. --Rupert Brooke

5.5.4 Varied Openings

Monotony especially threatens when sentence after sentence begins the same way. It is easy to open with something other than the usual subject and verb: a prepositional phrase; an adverbial clause; a connective like *therefore* or an adverb like *naturally,* or, immediately following the subject and splitting it from the verb, a nonrestrictive adjectival construction. Take a look at this passage:

> ➢ In the first decade of the new century, the South remained primarily rural; the beginnings of change, in those years, hardly affected the lot of the Negro. The agricultural system had never recovered fully from the destruction of the old plantation economy. Bound to the production of staples—tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar—the soil suffered from erosion and neglect. Those who cultivated it depended at best upon the uncertain returns of

> fluctuating world markets. But the circumstances under which labor was organized, particularly Negro labor, added to those difficulties further hardships of human Creation. --Oscar Handlin

Handlin's five sentences show considerable variety in their openings: a prepositional phrase (In the …), a subject (The agricultural system..), a participial phrase (Bound to the …), a subject (Those who …), and a connective word (But …).

5.5.5 Interrupted Movement

Interruption—positioning a modifier or even a second, independent sentence between main elements of a clause so that pauses are required on either side of the intruder—nicely varies straightforward movement. Here the writer places a second sentence between two clauses (italics added):

> ➤ I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—*it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery*—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. --George Orwell

5.6 Good Writing: Diction and Clarity

To be effective words must be precise. Precision means that words serve your purpose—that is, that they express exactly what you think or feel or see or hear. Precision also establishes an appropriate relationship between you and your readers and guides their responses. But in exposition precision is largely a matter of expressing your topic clearly. That is more complicated than it sounds. It is not simply a question of deciding what you perceive or think or know or feel, and then of choosing appropriate words. The distinction between what goes on in

our minds and how we put it into language is not that clear-cut. Words both limit and reveal reality. We do not so much "choose" words to fit our perceptions and ideas, as we see and think in terms of the words we know. To be more exact, the two processes—thinking, knowing, seeing, feeling, on the one hand; and using words, on the other—vitalize one another. Acquiring new words increases our capacity to understand ourselves and the world around us; and as our sensitivity to self and the world expands, we seek words that will express the subtler, more complicated persons we are becoming.

Diction—word choice—then, is the heart of writing. Sentences are important; paragraphing and clear organization are important. But words are fundamental. The essential virtue of words is that they be clear. At the same time, it is desirable that they be simple, concise, and original. To a considerable degree these virtues overlap: words that are simple and concise will be clear. Yet there are occasions when these qualities of diction work at cross purposes. Sometimes, for example, the need to be exact will override the need to be simple or concise. But in general you should aim first at clarity, then strive for simplicity and concision. In this and the next two sections we'll consider how to use words well. First, we look chiefly at clarity and simplicity; next at concision; and finally at original, unusual diction which gives extraordinary power and perceptiveness to writing. Here, then, are some things to keep in mind as you struggle— and struggle it is—to use words clearly and simply.

5.6.1 Concreteness and Abstraction

Abstract words signify things that cannot be directly perceived: *honor,* for instance, is an abstract word, as are *generosity* or *idea* or *democracy. Concrete* words refer to perceptible things: *a rose, a clap of thunder, the odor of violets.* No hard-and-fast distinction exists between abstract and concrete. Often it is a matter of degree. Depending on its context the same term may now be used abstractly, now concretely, like *rose* in these sentences:

> ➢ CONCRETE On the hall table a single yellow tea rose stood in a blue vase.

> LESS CONCRETE Roses were growing in the garden.

> ABSTRACT The rose family includes many varieties.

The closer a word comes to naming a single, unique object the more concrete it is. When diction moves from the specific and perceptible to the general and imperceptible, it becomes abstract. Do not suppose that abstract diction is necessarily a fault. If you deal with ideas, abstraction is inevitable. The following sentence is clear and concise, and almost all of its important words are abstract, yet they are essential to its clarity:

> All too often the debate about the place, purpose, and usefulness of films as a means of instruction is clouded by confusion, defensiveness, and ignorance. --Sol Worth

Even when dealing with ideas, however, wise writers do not stay too long on high levels of abstraction, especially if aiming at readers who do not share their expertise. They know that many readers find it hard to enjoy or understand words remote from the eyes and ears. Occasionally; they make us "see" and "hear" ideas by using images in the form of examples, analogies, similes, or metaphors. In the following case the abstract notion—that the meeting of extremes is dull—is given concrete, visual reality in the image (a word that refers to something we can sense, hear, touch, and so on) "a very flat country":

> It is often said truly, though perhaps not understood rightly, that extremes meet. But the strange thing is that extremes meet, not so much in being extraordinary, as in being dull. The country where the East and West are one, is a very flat country. --C. K. Chesterton

And in the following description of a Japanese train crew, notice how the abstract terms "trim" and "dapper" are made perceptible:

> Everything about them is trim and dapper; the stylized flourishes of the white gloved guard, for instance, as he waves the flag for the train to start from Sano station, or the

> precise unfumbling way the conductor, in equally clean white gloves, clips one's ticket,
>
> arms slightly raised, ticket held at the correct angle and correct distance from the body,
>
> clipper engaged and operated in a sharp single movement. --Ronald P. Dore

 If unrelieved abstraction can be a fault even when writing about abstract subjects, it is a far worse fault when writing about a subject that is not abstract at all. When you describe what you see and hear, touch and taste, use the most specific, concrete words you know:

> ➢ TOO ABSTRACT The large coves are surrounded by various buildings.
>
> ➢ MORE CONCRETE The large coves are surrounded by summer cottages, boat houses, and piers jutting into the water.
>
> ➢ EVEN BETTER The large coves are surrounded by summer cottages, trimly painted, with bright red and blue and green shutters; by boat houses, a few seeming about to slide into the lake, but most still used and well-maintained; and by piers jutting into the water, in good repair with sturdy railings, from which hang clean white life-rings.

Inexperienced writers often complain, "I haven't anything to write about." There's plenty to write about; all you have to do is look and listen.

5.6.2 Specificity

Aside from being concrete or abstract, words may also be general or specific. Here, too, it is a matter of degree. A general word designates a class: *emotion,* for example, is a general (or generic) term for all kinds of feelings. *Fear* is more specific, and *terror,* a particular kind of fear, more specific still. It is a common error to pick words that mean too much, to name an entire class when what you wish to signify is something less:

> ➢ Thrift is not one of their *attributes.* (For *virtues)*

> ➤ The novel has far too many *people.* (For *characters)*

Hardy's poem *allows* the reader to experience the crashing of the iceberg and the ship. (For *forces* or *makes)* On the other hand, there is nothing inherently wrong with general words. Sometimes you *do* want to refer to any or all feelings and then *emotion* is exactly the right word. If you mean humanity in general and not men or women or adults or Americans or Norwegians, then write People differ considerably in their religious beliefs.

5.6.3 Ambiguity

Ambiguity means that a word can be read in either of two ways and the context does not make clear which way is intended. (The term *ambiguity* is sometimes also applied when three or more interpretations are possible.) Ambiguity often is the result of a word's having two different senses:

> ➤ It was a *funny* affair. ("Laughable" or "strange"?)
>
> ➤ He's *mad.* ("Crazy" or "angry"?)

Large abstractions are often ambiguous, particularly if they involve value judgments. Words like *democracy, romantic,* and *Christian* encompass a wide range of meanings, some of them contradictory. A writer, or a reader, can easily make mistakes with such words, sliding unconsciously from one sense to another, an error which logicians call *equivocation.* Pronouns may be ambiguous if it is not clear which of two possible antecedents they refer to:

> ➤ #Children often anger parents; *they* won't talk to *them.*
>
> ➤ #We sat near the heater, as *it* was cold. (The "heater" or the unmentioned "room"?)

Some connectives are prone to ambiguity. *Or,* for instance, can signify (1) a logical disjunction, that is, *A* or *B* but not both; and (2) an alternative name or word for the same thing: "The shag,

or cormorant, is a common sea bird along the New England coast." *Because* after a negative statement may also be ambiguous:

> ➤ #We didn't go because we were tired. ("We did not go and the reason was that we were tired"; or, emphatically, "We did go and we certainly were not tired"?)

On other occasions ambiguity lurks, not in a single word, but in an entire statement:

> ➤ I liked this story as much as I liked all his others. ("I like all his stories, including this one"; or "I don't like any of his stories, including this one"?)

> ➤ So be it, until Victory is ours, and there is no enemy, but Peace. (" . . . there is no enemy, and now we have Peace"; or " . . . there is no enemy except Peace"?)

Clever writers exploit ambiguity as a kind of irony, seeming to say one thing while meaning another. Joan Didion, in the following description of a wedding, wryly comments on marriage by using "illusion" both in its technical, dressmaking sense of a bridal veil and in its more commonplace meaning of a false hope or dream:

> ➤ A coronet of seed pearls held her illusion veil.

And the nineteenth-century statesman and novelist Benjamin Disraeli had a standard response to all would-be authors who sent him unsolicited manuscripts:

> ➤ Many thanks; I shall lose no time in reading it.

5.6.4 Connotation

The connotation of a word is its fringe or associated meanings, including implications of approval or disapproval. When a connotation pulls awkwardly against the context, even though the basic meaning of the word fits, the term must be replaced. In the following sentence, for example, *unrealistic* has the wrong connotations for the writer's purpose:

> In such stories it is exciting to break away from the predictable world we live in and to enter an unrealistic world where anything can happen.

The problem is that the writer approves of the story because it stimulates the imagination. But usually *unrealistic* connotes disapproval ("Don't be so unrealistic"; "Her plan is too unrealistic to work"). Thus while the basic meaning (or denotation) of *unrealistic* fits, its connotations do not. Such terms *as fantastic, unpredictable, imaginary, wonder-filled* would be more appropriate.

5.6.5 Barbarisms

A *barbarism* is either a nonexistent word or an existing one used ungrammatically. Inventing new words is not necessarily a fault; imaginative writers create them—*neologisms,* they are called. But a genuine neologism fills a need. When an invented word is merely an ungrammatical form of a term already in the language, it serves no purpose and is a barbarism:

> She's always been a *dutifulled* daughter. (For *dutiful)*

Barbarisms are often spawned by confusion about suffixes, those endings which extend the meaning or alter the grammatical function of words—for example, as when *-ness* turns the adjective *polite* into the noun *politeness.* Sometimes a barbarism is the result of adding a second, unnecessary suffix to a word to restore it to what it was in the first place:

> #He has great ambitiousness. (For ambition)

> #The story contains a great deal of satiricalness. (For satire)

Aside from nonexistent words, barbarisms also include legitimate ones used ungrammatically. Confusion of sound or appearance often causes this error:

> #Garbage is also used to fill holes were houses are to be built. (For *where)*

> #The average man is not *conscience* of his wasteful behavior. (For *conscious)*

> ➢ #I should of gone. (For *should've)*

> ➢ #A women stood on the corner. (For *woman)*

The chances of confusion are even greater with homonyms, different words pronounced the same (and sometimes spelled alike as well): *bear* ("carry"), *bear* ("animal"), and *bare* ("naked"). Especially prone to misuse are the forms *there* (adverb), *their* (possessive pronoun), and *they're* (contraction of *they are);* and *to* (preposition), *too* (adverb), and *two* (adjective). Legitimate words may become barbarisms when misused in grammatical shifts. As we'll see in the next Section, grammatical shifts can be valuable in writing. (It means changing the normal grammatical function of a word, turning a noun, for example, into a verb, as in "The car *nosed* down the street.") But if it serves no valid purpose, such a shift is simply a barbarism:

> ➢ #Our *strive* for greatness is one of our best qualities. (For *striving)*

> ➢ #They made their *deciding.* (For *decision)*

Awkward shifts are common with adjectives and adverbs. Usually the problem is leaving off a necessary-ly:

> ➢ #She dances beautiful. (For beautifully)

> ➢ #They did it satisfactory. (For satisfactorily)

A rough rule is that adverbs of three or more syllables end *in-ly* and that those having one or two syllables are rather idiomatic: some always end *m-ly (deadly),* others never do *(welt),* and still others may be used either way *(slow* or *slowly, quick* or *quickly).* On the fringe of barbarism are many trendy words such as *finalize* and adverbs ending *in-wise* such as *weatherwise, university wise, economywise.* There seems little justification for a word like *finalize,* which says nothing that *complete* or *finish* does not say. On the other hand, one can argue that *weatherwise* is at least more concise than the phrase *in regard to the weather.* One's tolerance

for such terms depends on how liberal or conservative one is with regard to language (or languagewise).

5.6.6 Idiom

An idiom is a combination of words functioning as a unit of meaning, as in "to take the subway [bus, streetcar] home." Often one or more of the words has a special sense different from its usual meaning and confined to that idiom. Thus *to take* here means "to get on and travel in." In its idiomatic sense such a word cannot be replaced by any of its usual equivalents: we cannot *"carry, bring,* or *fetch* the subway home." Idioms are always a difficulty in learning foreign languages. They are not easily reduced to rules and each must be memorized. Even native speakers make mistakes with idioms. The most frequent errors involve verb-preposition combinations:

> ➤ #I complained with my parents about their attitude.
>
> ➤ IDIOMATIC: *complained to*
>
> ➤ #She concluded *in* saying....
>
> ➤ IDIOMATIC: *concluded by*
>
> ➤ #That is where we fool ourselves of our efficiency.
>
> ➤ IDIOMATIC: *fool ourselves about*
>
> ➤ #They can't decide what to do with their problem.
>
> ➤ IDIOMATIC: do *about their problem*

Errors like these probably come from confusing two idioms *(complain about* and *argue with,* for example), or from selecting an inappropriate one of several possible verb preposition idioms (we

do *with* physical objects—"What shall we do with this vase?"—but we do *about* problems, difficulties, abstractions of various kinds—"What shall we do about that crack in the vase?").

Although they are most likely with verbs and prepositions, mistakes in idiom occur with other grammatical patterns. Some verbs, for instance, do not combine idiomatically with certain objects:

> ➢ People only look out for prestige. (Prestige is looked for, valued, esteemed.)
>
> ➢ Robert Frost gives the image of a silken tent in a field. (Poets create or develop images.)

Adjectives and nouns also enter into idiomatic combinations:

> ➢ We have a *great* standard of living.
>
> ➢ IDIOMATIC: high
>
> ➢ The English prefer *dining-room* comedy.
>
> ➢ IDIOMATIC: *drawing-room comedy*

5.6.7 Colloquial and Pretentious Diction

Colloquialisms are expressions appropriate to informal, conversational occasions. In writing they may sound out of place:

> ➢ #We have a *swell* professor of mathematics.
>
> ➢ BETTER: *nice, interesting, pleasant*

Colloquial words are a problem when they fit awkwardly with their contexts or when they are vague. And frequently colloquialisms *are* vague. (What, for example, does *swell* mean in the sentence above?) In speech we compensate for verbal vagueness by gestures, tone of voice, the common ground of knowledge and experience we share with our friends. None of these aids to communication is available to the writer. On the other hand, some colloquialisms are

remarkably expressive, and these are more acceptable now than they were a generation ago, when writers were more scrupulous about levels of usage. Today, we feel freer to mix formal words and colloquial ones. The result, if controlled by word sense and taste, is a clear gain in precision and variety (italics added in both cases):

> Joan's voices and visions have *played tricks* with her reputation. --George Bernard Shaw

> There's another *wrinkle* to this. --Elizabeth Janeway

An extreme form of colloquialism is slang. We all use slang, and we all recognize it. But we find it very difficult to define. Sometimes slang is an ordinary word given a special meaning: *heavy* in the sense of serious, or *cool* in the sense of unperturbed or a little better than all right. Other slang terms occur only as slang—*nerd,* for instance. Slang tends to be short-lived: that of one generation sounds silly to the next. (There are exceptions; some slang terms are notably long-lived—*dough, okay.)* Slang tends also to be richly suggestive in meaning, conveying a wide range of attitudes and responses and values in a brief expression *(square, hep).* But the richness is likely to hide an imprecision: often we feel that a slang term says exactly what we want to say, but we find it very difficult to explain what that something is.

Even more than colloquialisms, slang has an air of informality. That tone can be useful, helping to create a good writer-reader relationship or a likable persona. Used intelligently, an occasional bit of slang will not only say exactly the right thing but also please us by its novelty (italics added):

> The authors had a reputation for being jealous of each other's fame and losing no opportunity of *putting the boot in* [kicking a fallen opponent] . . . . --Frank Muir

> I don't mean to suggest that Segal is as *gaga* as this book *[Love Story]*—only that a part of him is. --Pauline Kael

5.6.8 Pretentiousness

Pretentiousness is using big words to no purpose (except perhaps to show off). It results in long-winded, wooden sentences filled with deadwood. Shorter, simpler words mean shorter, clearer sentences:

> ➤ Upon receiving an answer in the affirmative, he proceeded to the bulletin board.
>
> ➤ BETTER: Told yes, he went to the bulletin board.
>
> ➤ Television shows which demonstrate participation in physical exercise will improve your muscle tone.
>
> ➤ BETTER: Television exercise shows improve your muscle tone.

Remember, though, that not all unusual or learned terms are a flaw, even when they could be replaced by simpler ones. Skillful writers employ uncommon words to draw attention or to imply a subtlety. Here, for instance, a learned word wittily conceals a vulgar insult:

> ➤ Among those who distrust the [literary] critic as an intrusive middleman, edging his vast steatopygous bulk between author and audience, it is not uncommon to wish him away, out of the direct line of Vision. --Carlos Baker

5.6.9 Clichés and Jargon

A *cliché* is a trite expression, one devalued by overuse:

an agonizing reappraisal

the bottom line

at this point in time

the finer things of life

cool, calm, and collected

the moment of truth

history tells us

the voice of the people

Many *clichés* are simply stale figures of speech:

cool as a cucumber

Mother Nature

dead as a doornail

pleased as Punch

gentle as a lamb

sober as a judge

happy as a lark

the patience of Job

in the pink the

pinnacle of success

light as a feather

white as snow

Clichés are dull and unoriginal. Worse, they impede clear perception, feeling, or thought. Clichés are verbal molds into which we force experience. Instead of shaping reality for ourselves, we accept it, and pass it on, precast (and probably miscast). Clichés, however, ought not to be confused with *dead metaphors.* Expressions like *the key to the problem, the heart of the matter, the mouth of the river,* if they ever were clichés, are so no longer. They are simply old metaphors long dead and now useful, everyday diction. A cliché attempts to be original and

perceptive but fails. A dead metaphor, on the other hand, makes no pretense to newness; it has dried and hardened into a useful expression for a common idea. A special kind of cliché is the *euphemism,* which softens or conceals a fact considered improper or unpleasant. Euphemisms for death include *to pass away, to depart this life, to go to that big [whatever] in the sky*—all equally trite. Poverty, sexual matters, and diseases are often named euphemistically. Politicians, diplomats, advertisers are adept with euphemisms: *dedication to public service* = "personal ambition," *a frank exchange of views* = "continued disagreement," *tired blood* = "anemia."

5.6.10 *Jargon*

Jargon is technical language misused. Technical language, the precise diction demanded by any specialized trade or profession, is necessary when experts communicate with one another. It becomes jargon when it is applied outside the limits of technical discourse. Jargon is really a kind of pretentiousness, a learned and mysterious language designed to impress the nonexpert:

> ➢ Given a stockpile of innovative in-house creativity for the generation of novel words, substituting members for the input of letters whenever feasible, and fiscally optimized by computer capacitization for targeting in on core issues relating to aims, goals, and priorities, and learned skills, we might at last be freed from our dependence on the past.

This is in fact a parody by Lewis Thomas, a biologist who does *not* write jargon. It catches the faults of jargon perfectly: the abstract, polysyllabic Latinism *(capacitization, optimized);* the trendy word *(creativity, in-house, input, core issues);* the pointless redundancy *(aims, goals, and priorities);* and the awesome combination of modifiers and headwords *(innovative in-house creativity, computer capacitization).*

At its worst jargon is incomprehensible. (The word originally meant the twittering of birds.) Even when it can be puzzled out, jargon is nothing more than puffed-up language, a kind of false profundity in which simple ideas are padded out in polysyllabic dress.

5.6.11 Awkward Figures

Figures of speech are words used less for their literal meaning than for their capacity to clarify or intensify feelings or ideas. For the writer of exposition the most common and important figures are the simile and metaphor. A *simile* is a comparison, generally introduced by *like* or *as.* The essayist Robert Lynd describes the bleak houses of a nineteenth-century city as looking "like seminaries for the production of killjoys." A *metaphor* is more complicated. For now let us say only that it expresses an implicit comparison, not a literal one (as a simile does):

> ➢ When I walked to the mailbox, a song sparrow placed his incomparable seal on the outgoing letters. --E. B. White

White does not literally say that the bird's song is like a bright stamp or seal, but the comparison is there. In other sections we look at figures at greater length and in a more positive light. Here we are concerned with their misuse. A metaphor or simile can be faulty in any of three ways: it can be inappropriate, mixed, or overwhelming. *Mixed metaphors* ask us to perceive simultaneously two things that simply cannot go together:

> ➢ He put his foot in his mouth and jumped off the deep end.
>
> ➢ We must feel with the fingertips of our eyeballs.

Inappropriate figures contain implications that do not fit the context and are likely to imply meanings the writer does not intend:

A green lawn spread invitingly from the road to the house, with a driveway winding up to the entrance like a snake in the grass. Since the writer intended no sinister implications, comparing

the driveway to a snake is misleading. Moreover, the simile, aside from being misleading and trite, is ridiculous. A snake in the grass is a kinetic image—one involving motion—and a wriggling driveway is silly. *Overwhelming figures* ride roughshod over the main idea, as in the following sentence (about the considerable girth of the comedian Jackie Gleason):

> ➤ Out of that flesh grew benign tumors of driving energy and unsatisfied appetite that stuck to his psyche and swelled into a galloping disease that at once blights and regenerates him.

5.6.12   False Hyperbole

Hyperbole (often shortened to *hype* in modern usage) is deliberate exaggeration intended to intensify importance or emotional force. Though no hyperbole is ever intended to be taken literally, we may properly call it false only when the exaggeration far outdistances the real value of the idea or feeling:

> ➤ Football is the most magnificent sport ever developed by the mind of man. It tests physical skill, stamina, courage, and intelligence more thoroughly than any other human activity.
>
> ➤ One shudders to think of what the world would have been like if Shakespeare had never written *The Tempest*.

Although these are silly exaggerations, hyperbole can be used legitimately. It is an old and useful figure of speech (though not as fashionable today as it once was). In the nineteenth century politicians delighted in spread-eagle oratory, and historians cultivated a hyperbolical style. In the following passage, for example, the American historian William H. Prescott writes about the ill effects of the gold which Spain had expropriated from the New World in the 1500s:

> The golden tide, which, permitted a free vent, would have fertilized the region, through which it poured, now buried the land under a deluge which blighted every green and living thing.

Mark Twain was a master of hyperbole, as he reveals in this description of a tree after an ice storm:

> . . . it stands there the acme, the climax, the supremest possibility in art or nature, of bewildering, intoxicating, intolerable magnificence. One cannot make the words strong enough.

Twain is at his best—at least to modern ears—when he uses hyperbole for comic effect:

> [On the New England weather] In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four-andtwenty hours. [On the music of Richard Wagner] Another time we went to Mannheim and attended a shivaree—otherwise an opera—called "Lohengrin." The banging and slamming and booming and crashing were beyond belief, the racking and pitiless pain of it remains stored up in my memory alongside the memory of the time I had my teeth fixed.

5.6.13   Repetitiousness

A word, unless it is important, will sound awkward if it is repeated too closely. It ought to be replaced by a synonym or a pronoun:

> The auto industry *used* to produce cars that lasted, but they didn't make enough profit so planned obsolescence came into *use.*

> BETTER: .. . came into fashion.

> #This *narrative* is *narrated by* a *narrator* whom we cannot completely trust

> ➤ BETTER: This story is told by a narrator whom we cannot completely trust.

However, repetitiousness must be distinguished from legitimate restatement, in which words are repeated for emphasis or clarity:

> ➤ He [a lax governor] took things easy, and his fellow freebooters took everything easily. --Hodding Carter

> ➤ [Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" is] a poem written not in ink but in tears, a rich suffusion of emotion rising up in a grubby room in Grub street for a grubby little Irish village. --Sean O'Faolain

The line between awkward repetition and effective restatement is not easy to draw. As a general rule, a repeated word should be important, able to stand the attention readers will give it.

5.6.14 Awkward Sound

We choose words primarily for what they mean, but we must remember that words are also units of sound and rhythm. Even people adept at silent reading will be put off by awkward patterns of sound, though they may not realize exactly what bothers them. Most often the problem is an accidental repetition of the same sound:

> ➤ #There is a *growing* awareness of the *slowing* down of growth affecting our economy.

> ➤ BETTER: There is a growing awareness that diminished rates of growth are affecting our economy.

> ➤ #Built-in obsolescence has become the essence of our society.

> ➤ BETTER: . . . has become the basis of our society.

> ➤ #At the top of the hill were three *fine pine* trees standing in a *line*.

> ➤ BETTER: . .. three beautiful pine trees in a row.

But it is also true that rhyme, the deliberate repetition of sound, has a place in prose, as in this example:

> ➢ . . . those Hairbreadth Harrys of History [who] save the world just when it's slipping into the abyss. Arthur Herzog

As is often the case with diction, it is not easy to separate vice from virtue. Generally, rhyme is awkward when it is accidental or when—even if deliberate—it is too obvious or heavy-handed. Effective rhyme involves key terms and does not shout. The best guard against awkward repetition of sound is to read your work aloud. If words jar your ear, change them.

5.7 Good Writing: Diction and Concision

As we saw earlier, concision is brevity relative to purpose. Here we consider it from the point of view of diction. When you fail to be concise the result is *deadwood,* words that perform no useful function and simply get in the way of those that do.

5.7.1 Psychological Factors

Verbal profundity is the fallacy that words which look impressive must mean a lot. The person, for example, who exclaimed of a painting that it exhibits "orderly and harmonious juxtapositions of color patterns" seemed to be saying a great deal. But if the words mean anything more than "color harmony," it is difficult to see what. Closely related to verbal profundity is the desire for *false elegance,* often a variety of what in the previous section we called pretentious diction. A sentence like:

> ➢ #A worker checks the watch's time-keeping performance.

is an attempt to cast a verbal spell over the job of quality control in a watch factory. This is shorter, simpler, and clearer:

> ➢ A worker checks the watch's accuracy.

Confusion about the subject also leads to wordiness:

> ➤ #Music is similar to dress fads in that its styles change from time to time. Perhaps the change is subtle, but no one style of music will remain on top for a very long time. I am not talking about classical music, but rather about popular music that appeals to the majority of young people.

This writer did not begin with a word specific enough for his subject. He chose too general a term ("music"). The final sentence reveals that he himself felt the problem, for he spends twenty words explaining what kind of music he means. How much easier to have begun:

> ➤ Popular music is similar to dress fads. . . .

Sometimes deadwood stems from *ignorance of words.* That's the problem here:

> ➤ #In this novel, part of the theme is stated directly in so many words, and part is not so much said in specific words but is more or less hinted at.

Had the writer known the terms *explicit* and *implicit* he could have made the point more clearly and concisely:

> ➤ In this novel, part of the theme is explicit, and part is implicit.

A limited vocabulary is no disgrace. We all suffer that handicap, and education is the process of overcoming it. But while it may be pardonable, not knowing the right word often results in obscurity and deadwood. It helps to keep a list of pairs like *explicit* and *implicit* which enable you to make distinctions quickly and neatly: *extrinsic/intrinsic, concrete/'abstract, actual/ideal, absolute/relative* are other examples.

Finally, *excessive caution* contributes to deadwood. Some people are afraid to express anything as certain. They will write:

> ➢ #It seems that Columbus discovered the New World in 1492.

Certainly some things call for caution. But no one can lay down a blanket rule about when qualification is necessary and when it is verbose. We'll consider the question in closer detail later in the section; for the moment remember that extreme caution in writing is more often a vice than a virtue. A false sense of what is significant, confusion about what you want to say, ignorance of words, and timidity, then, are some of the psychological factors leading to deadwood. In practice, they are manifested in either of two ways: *circumlocution* and *pointlessness*

5.7.2 Circumlocution

Circumlocution is using too many words to say something.

5.7.2.1   Circumlocution: Avoid Meaningless Strings of Verbs

English often conveys subtleties by stringing verbs:

> ➢ #I was *going to go* tomorrow.

Here the verbs are justified by the meaning (that a planned future action is now uncertain or negated). But when a string of verbs says nothing that cannot be said with equal clarity or force in fewer words, the result is deadwood:

> ➢ #The current foreign situation *should serve to start* many Americans to begin thinking.
>
> ➢ BETTER: . . . should start many Americans thinking.
>
> ➢ #Nucleonics investigates the smaller particles that *go to make up* the nucleus of the atom.
>
> ➢ BETTER: . .. that make up the nucleus of the atom.

A special case of empty verb strings is the *awkward passive construction.* The focus of thought or tact may make the passive voice necessary. Generally, however, you should write in the active voice. Overuse of the passive lards sentences with empty words:

> ➢ #The writer's point *must be clearly stated by him at* the beginning of the paragraph.
>
> ➢ BETTER: The writer must clearly state his point at the beginning of the paragraph.
>
> ➢ #The work *must be done* by her by tomorrow.
>
> ➢ BETTER: She must do the work by tomorrow.

(In the last example, however, note that if one wished to emphasize "work," the passive would be justified.)

5.7.2.2   Circumlocution: The Best Modification is Concise and Direct

In practice this principle often boils down to not using a phrase if a word will do:

> ➢ #She conducted herself in an irrational manner.
>
> ➢ BETTER: She conducted herself irrationally.
>
> ➢ BETTER YET: She acted irrationally.
>
> ➢ #He didn't take the advice given to him by his doctor.
>
> ➢ BETTER: He didn't take his doctor's advice.
>
> ➢ #It leaves us with the thought that. . . .
>
> ➢ BETTER: It leaves us thinking that . . . .

A common kind of adjectival wordiness is using a full relative clause to introduce a participle or adjective that could be attached directly to the noun:

> ➢ #This is the same idea *that was* suggested last week.

> ➢ BETTER: This is the same idea suggested last week.

> ➢ #The family *who* are living in that house are my friends.

> ➢ BETTER: The family living in that house are my friends.

In such clauses the relative word *(that, which, who)* acts as the subject and is immediately followed by a form of *be* which is, in turn, followed by a participle or adjective. The relative word and the verb contribute nothing except to hook the adjective or participle to the noun. Occasionally clarity, emphasis, or rhythm justify the whole clause. Mostly they do not.

The direct, economic use of participles is a resource of style that inexperienced writers underuse. The economy also applies to adverbial clauses, which can sometimes be boiled down to one or two operative words:

> ➢ #Because they lacked experience, they didn't do a good job.

> ➢ BETTER: Lacking experience, they didn't do a good job.

Now and then, independent clauses or separate sentences may be pruned and subordinated by means of participles:

> ➢ #These ideas are out of date, and they don't tell us anything new.

> ➢ BETTER: These ideas are out of date, telling us nothing new.

Participles are also more economical than gerunds:

> ➢ #She worried about *the cooking of* the dinner.

> ➢ BETTER: She worried about cooking the dinner.

Note, however, that you must consider meaning in such revisions.

"She worried about the cooking of the dinner" would make sense if someone else were doing the cooking.

5.7.2.3   Circumlocution: Specificity Means Concision

Beginning with a word too general for your idea creates a need for wordy modification:

> ➢ #People who enter college for the first time find it difficult to adjust to the teaching.

"People" is too inclusive. To specify what kind of "people," the writer must add seven words. English provides no single term meaning "people who enter college for the first time" (except *matriculants,* a Latinism too forbidding for this writer's purpose). *Students,* however, would be more precise than *people,* and *freshmen,* more precise still (even though second-semester freshmen are not, strictly speaking, entering college for the first time). With *freshmen* only one modifier is needed:

> ➢ College freshmen find it difficult to adjust to the teaching.

While most frequent with nouns, failure to be specific occurs with verbs as well:

> ➢ #he sudden change motivated him into a rage.
>
> ➢ BETTER: The sudden change enraged him.
>
> ➢ #They emerged victorious.
>
> ➢ BETTER: They won.

The too-general verb is often a form of *he, have,* or *seem.* When these merely link a noun or modifier to the subject, they can often be replaced by a more exact verb:

> ➢ #The people *were supportive of* conservation.
>
> ➢ BETTER: The people supported conservation.

> ➤ #Officers have to *have a knowledge* of their men.

> ➤ BETTER: Officers have to know their men.

5.7.2.4   Circumlocution: Keep Prepositions and Conjunctions Brief

Piled-up connectives grow like weeds if you do not pull them:

> ➤ #More than one game has been decided *on the basis of a* fumble.

> ➤ BETTER: . .. decided by a fumble.

Wordy equivalents for *because, how,* and *so* are particularly common:

> ➤ #The bill failed *as a result of the fact that* the Senate was misinformed.

> ➤ BETTER: . . . because the Senate was misinformed.

> ➤ #She will show us *the way in which* to do it.

> ➤ BETTER: She will show us how to do it.

> ➤ #He becomes self-conscious *to the extent* that he withdraws into himself.

> ➤ BETTER: He becomes so self-conscious that he withdraws into himself.

5.7.3 Pointlessness

Pointlessness is saying something that doesn't need to be said at all. Pointless words serve no purpose. They do not need to be made more concise; they need to be eliminated. There are two broad causes of pointless diction: (1) failing to credit readers' intelligence, and (2) failing to focus on the subject.

5.7.3.1   Pointlessness: Failing to Credit Readers' Intelligence

Think about your readers, and avoid telling them what they already know or can easily infer from the context.

Don't Define What Is Common Knowledge.

> ➢ #Accountants sometimes function as auditors *(people from outside a company who check the books kept by the company's own accountants).*

All the italicized words in that sentence are dead. If readers understand "accountants," there is no reason to suppose that "auditors" requires definition. Gratuitous definitions not only make deadwood, but interfere with communication in another, more serious way—annoying readers by seeming to insult their intelligence. Granted, it is not easy to decide when a word ought to be defined. In the following instance the naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch, writing for general readers, realizes that they will not understand geological terms and neatly explains what they need to know:

> ➢ To even the most uninstructed eye a scorpion fossilized during the Silurian or Devonian epoch—say something like three hundred million years ago—is unmistakably a scorpion.

Ask yourself whether a definition is needed *by the reader whom you have in mind.* (And remember that it is not too much to ask people to look into a dictionary now and again.)

Don't Spell Out What Is Clearly Implied

Unless there is a clear chance of confusion, you do not have to state what is entailed in a word's meaning (the deadwood is italicized):

> ➢ #Her dress was blue *in color.*
>
> ➢ #He was very tall *in height.*

Noun-adjectival combinations often contain deadwood caused by over-explicitness. In many cases the adjective is unnecessary:

> ➢ #There is considerable danger *involved.*

- ➤ #We question the methods *employed.*

- ➤ #The equipment *needed* is expensive.

- ➤ #The store stocks many products to *be sold.*

- ➤ #Each play has a special purpose *when it is used.*

- ➤ #This question has two sides to *it*

- ➤ #Most countries *of the world* have their own coinage.

- ➤ #In other cases it is the noun that is dead:

- ➤ #They committed *an act of* burglary.

- ➤ #The quarterback is noted for his passing *ability.*

- ➤ #It has existed for a long *period of time.*

- ➤ #She was an unusual *kind of* child.

- ➤ #The punt return resulted in a fumble *situation.*

- ➤ #The last major barrier to the westward expansion *movement* was the Rocky Mountains.

Categorizing words such as *kind, sort, type, class,* and so on are especially prone to dead use. Emphasis or tone will sometimes justify "He is the kind of man who...." Otherwise, the more concise "He is a man who . . . " is preferable. Often in these noun-adjectival combinations, the adjectives can be used substantively, that is, as nouns:

- ➤ #On quilts, silk patches replaced *the homespun ones.*

- ➤ BETTER: On quilts, silk patches replaced homespun.

Verbs, too, hide implicit meanings, which, whether expressed as a complement or a modifier, are often better left unsaid:

> ➢ #She always procrastinates *things*.
>
> ➢ #He tends to squint *his eyes*.
>
> ➢ #I have been told *by various people* that smoking is sophisticated.

Sometimes an idea is clearly implied by the total context rather than by any single word. Each of these phrases is dead:

> ➢ #Writing poetry requires experience as well as sensibility. A prerequisite to *writing poetry* is being able to write prose.
>
> ➢ #I dislike television. Most programs *on television* are unbelievable.
>
> ➢ #A good personality will help anyone, no matter what profession he or she chooses *in life*.

A special but frequent form of over-explicitness is the unneeded connective, especially common with conjunctive adverbs like *however, therefore, furthermore,* and so on. The following sentence does not really need the connective:

> ➢ #People think that stamp collecting requires money; *however,* it doesn't.
>
> ➢ BETTER: People think that stamp collecting requires money; it doesn't.

The negated verb establishes the contradiction, and removing "however" even strengthens the point. Probably it is true that inexperienced writers use too few conjunctive adverbs rather than too many. Even so, it pays to check *howevers* and *thuses* and *consequentlys.* Be sure that you really need them, or rather, that your readers really need them.

It can be wordy and tiresome to spell out all the connections of your ideas. The same impulse can make you heavy-handed in explaining your intentions—telling the reader what you're going to do next, or have just done, or won't do at all. Such explanations are like scaffolding around a new building. Scaffolding can be helpful in early drafts, enabling you to see where you're going. But when they revise, experienced writers dismantle most of these planks and ladders. Some should remain—enough to help readers where they need help. Where they do not, where they can follow your progress for themselves, scaffolding gets in the way, obscuring thought as staging around a new building conceals its shape.

Use subordinate connectives only when the main clause states a major point, with the dependent clause establishing a relation in place, time or logic.

> ➤ The edge of the cape was wet with blood *where* it had swept along the bull's back as he went by.

Effective subordination:

4. Clarifies relationships in a sentence by joining two disjointed statements.

> ➤ #Kroger organized a counterfeiting ring. He had studied printing in Germany.

> ➤ BETTER: Kroger, *who had studied printing in Germany*, organized a counterfeiting ring.

5. Avoid upside down subordination when no irony is intended. Careful not to blur emphasis: "I was ten *when* I moved to Alaska" focuses the attention on you and your age. "When I was ten, *we moved to Alaska*" focuses the attention on Alaska.

> ➤ #The salary was considered good by local standards, *though* it was not enough to feed and cloth my family.
>
> BETTER: *Though* considered good by local standards, my salary was not enough to feed and clothe my family.

Use modifiers to help a sentence carry added freight instead of using separate clauses.

> Routine: We caught two bass. We hauled them in briskly, as though they were mackerel. After we pulled them over the side of the boat, we stunned them with a blow on the back of the head.

> Effective: We caught two bass, *hauling them in briskly* as though they were mackerel, *pulling them over the side of the boat* in a businesslike manner without any landing net, and *stunning them with a blow on the back of the head*.

Break up subject and verb

> The horse, *lifted and gored*, crashed over with the bull driving into him.

> Manuel, *lying on the ground*, kicked at the bull's muzzle with his slippered feet.

Announcement—when it cannot be justified by emphasis— is a particularly awkward kind of scaffolding. An overworked formula is "Let me say" (variants: "Let me make clear," "Let me explain," "Let me tell you something"). Be on guard against pointless announcement at the beginning of a composition. Many readers react negatively to this sort of opening:

> #The essay that follows is about baseball. Specifically, it will deal with the business organization of a major league team.

> BETTER: Supporting every major league baseball team is a complex business organization.

Good writers help their readers, but they do not assume that readers are helpless.

In an anticipatory sentence, the subject is not the grammatical subject. Instead it is introduced by a pronoun such as *it, this, that, these, those, there* which functions as the grammatical subject (that anticipates the real subject).

- ➤ #This is the man who witnessed the accident.

- ➤ #There are many property owners who object to new schools

- ➤ This man witnessed the accident.

- ➤ Many property owners object to new schools.

Sometimes the extra words serve a valid purpose, such as emphasis or idiom. When they do not they are deadwood (e.g. *seems, appears)*

- ➤ #It seems that this professor did not prepare his lectures very well.

- ➤ This professor did not prepare his lectures very well.

Use Colon or Dash to Rid of Deadwood

- ➤ #There were many reasons for the Civil War, which include slavery, economic expansion, the issue of states' rights, cultural differences, and sectional jealousies.

- ➤ There were many reasons for the Civil War: slavery, economic expansion, the issue of states' rights, cultural differences, and sectional jealousies.

- ➤ #Pitchers are divided into two classes. These classes are starters and relievers.

- ➤ Pitchers are divided into two classes--starters and relievers.

Use Ellipsis

Ellipsis means omitting words from a sentence which are necessary to complete the grammar but not the sense.

- ➤ #He is taller than his brother *is.*

- ➤ He is taller than his brother.

- ➢ #When *you are* late, you must sign yourself in.

- ➢ When late, you must sign yourself in.

- ➢ #He lost his wallet; she *lost* her pocketbook.

- ➢ He lost his wallet; she, her pocketbook.

Use Predicate Adjectives

A predicate adjective stands after its noun, connected to it by a linking verb (*is, are, was, were, seems, becomes*)

- ➢ #The house *is* large.

An attributive adjective stands before the noun it modifies.

- ➢ A large house.

- ➢ #Riots became frequent affairs.

- ➢ Riots became frequent

- ➢ #Mr. Martin is a quiet, patient, and cautious person.

- ➢ Mr. Martin is quiet, patient, and cautious.

"affairs" and "person" are empty words.

Do not waste the subject, verb, and object.

> ➢ #The fact of the war had the effect of causing many changes

> ➢ The war caused many changes.

The subject, verb and object form the core of a sentence. They ought to convey the core too.

Avoid Empty Redundancy

Empty redundancy is pointless repetition. It is often found in headwords and modifiers:

> ➢ #bisect in half
>
> ➢ #modern life of today
>
> ➢ #vital essentials
>
> ➢ #sufficiently satisfied
>
> ➢ #It is clearly evident that
>
> ➢ #He hanged himself, thereby taking his own life.

Unlike legitimate restatements for clarity or emphasis, such redundancies are awkward and illogical, special instances of not understanding what words mean. A phrase like "vital essentials" seems to imply that there are "essentials" which are not "vital," a contradiction. Can you "bisect" anything without cutting it "in half"? Can a man hang himself without "thereby taking his own life"? (Never mind the rope's breaking; *bang* in such a context means to cause death.)

5.7.3.2   Failing to Focus on the Subject

Here deadwood comes from wandering away from the topic, from pursuing irrelevancies:

Don't Open Up Topics You Will Not Develop

Now an idea in itself may be interesting, but if it does not support your topic it is just deadwood:

> ➤ #The people had come to the new world for freedom *of several different kinds,* and had found injustice instead.

There is nothing inherently dead in "of several different kinds." But the writer does not discuss these kinds of freedom (nor does his subject require him to). To mention them at all, then, is a mistake. The phrase contributes nothing to the main point. Even worse, it mutes the contrast between the key terms "freedom" and "injustice" and misleads readers by pointing to a path of development they will not find.

Avoid the Distinction Without a Difference

A pointless distinction is naming several varieties of something when those varieties do not matter for your purpose:

Under the honor system, teachers do not have to stand guard during *exams, tests, and quizzes.*

There are of course real differences among exams, tests, and quizzes, and had the writer been concerned with the various modes of testing students must endure, the distinctions would have been vital. But in fact the topic is the honor system, and the distinction is empty. One word would do, probably "tests," the most general.

Don't Overqualify

It is worth saying again that excessive caution leads to deadwood:

> ➤ #Theater-in-the-round *somewhat* resembles an arena.

Why so cautious? *Resembles* does not mean "identical with"; it doesn't need the protection of "somewhat." Writing so timidly is like holding up one's trousers with belt, suspenders, and several huge safety pins. Qualification is often necessary if you are to treat ideas without ignoring their complexity. But pointless qualification is wordy foolishness.

The verbs *seem* and *tend* and the windy phrase *can be said to be* (in place of a simple *is)* often indicate overqualification:

> ➢ After a square dance the people are pretty tired, but *it seems that* when they have tried it once they want more.
>
> ➢ BETTER: . . . but when they have tried it once they want more.
>
> ➢ #This play tends to *be* a comedy.
>
> ➢ BETTER: This play is a comedy.
>
> ➢ #Ethan *can be said to be a tragic* hero.
>
> ➢ BETTER: Ethan is a tragic hero.

Use Single Adverb or Adjective

Adverbs and adjectives should link as directly and concisely as possible to what they really modify. Avoid deadwood. Don't be afraid to use adverbs.

> ➢ #He acted in an unnatural way
>
> ➢ He acted unnaturally
>
> ➢ #The organization of a small business can be described in a brief statement.
>
> ➢ The organization of a small business can be briefly described.

Another verb that is often deadwood is *would.* This auxiliary does have legitimate uses—to indicate a conditional action, for example:

> ➢ I would have gone if I had known you were there.

Or to anticipate a future effect:

> ➢ The defeat would ultimately prove disastrous.

But when there is no question of doubt or conditionality or an anticipated future, *would* is a wasted word (and sometimes subtly misleading):

> ➢ #That *would be* my brother at the door.

> ➢ BETTER: That is my brother at the door.

5.8 Figurative Language

Whenever language is simple, plain, direct, whenever it employs words in their conventional meaning, we say that it is literal. *Literal* comes from the Latin *litera,* "letter"; what is literal is according to the letter. Consider, for example, this statement: "A writer's style should be purposive, not merely decorative." It is to be read literally: the words mean nothing more, and nothing less, than what they say.

In figurative language the same idea has been expressed like this: "Style is the feather in the arrow, not the feather in the cap." *Figurative* means that a word has been stretched to accommodate a larger or even very different sense from that which it usually conveys. A writer can make this stretch because of a likeness between different concepts, a likeness the context reveals. Thus the literal meaning of "feather in the arrow" is the stabilizer that keeps the arrow straight; the figurative meaning is that style keeps prose on target. A writer must provide clues for readers so they may understand figurative words. In speech, we signal such meanings by gestures, facial expressions, pronunciation, or tone of voice (think of how we say *generous* to twist its sense to "stingy" when we say of a cheap acquaintance, "He's a generous guy!").

In writing, the context—the rest of the sentence, paragraph, and even total composition—controls a figurative word, making it fly in an unusual direction. Effective figures depend on total diction, on all your words. You do not improve writing by sticking in occasional similes or metaphors. They must be woven into prose. When they are, figures of speech add great richness. Look again at the comparison of style to the feathers of an arrow. It enhances

meaning on at least four levels. First, it clarifies and concretizes an unfamiliar and abstract idea ("style") in a striking visual image. Second, it enlarges our conception of style, endowing style with the functions of the feather in the arrow (providing stability and guidance) and disassociating it from the qualities of a feather in a cap (vanity, pretentiousness, pointless decoration). Third, the figure implies judgment: that style in the "arrow-feather" sense is good, while style in the "hat-feather" sense is bad. Finally, the figure entertains: we take pleasure in the witty succinctness with which a complicated idea is made clearer and enriched by the image of the two feathers. Thus figures clarify, they expand and deepen meaning, they express feelings and judgments, and they are pleasurable. We observe these virtues over and over as we look at the more common figures of speech. The most frequent and most useful are similes and metaphors. Similes first.

5.8.1 Similes

A simile is a brief comparison, usually introduced by *like* or *as.* The preposition *like* is used when the following construction is a word or phrase:

> ➢ My words swirled around his head *like* summer flies. --E. B. White

The conjunction *as* introduces a clause, that is, a construction containing its own subject and verb:

> ➢ The decay of society was praised by artists *as* the decay of a corpse is praised by worms.
>
> --G. K. Chesterton

A simile consists of two parts: tenor and vehicle. The *tenor* is the primary subject—"words" in White's figure, the "decay of society" and "artists" in Chesterton's. The *vehicle* is the thing to which the main subject is compared—"summer flies" and the "decay of a corpse" and "worms."

Usually, though not invariably, the vehicle is, or contains, an image. An *image* is a word or expression referring to something we can perceive. "Summer flies," for example, is an image,

primarily a visual one, though like many images it has a secondary perceptual appeal: we can hear the flies as well as see them.

Vehicle commonly follows tenor, as in the two instances above. But the vehicle may come first, emphasizing the main subject by delay and also arousing our curiosity by putting the cart before the horse:

> ➢ Like a crack in a plank of wood which cannot be sealed, the difference between the worker and the intellectual was ineradicable in Socialism. --Barbara Tuchman

Most similes are brief, but they may be expanded—usually by breaking the vehicles into parts and applying each to the tenor. A historian, writing about the Italian patriot Garibaldi, explains that:

> ➢ his mind was like a vast sea cave, filled with the murmur of dark waters at flow and the stirring of nature's greatest forces, lit here and there by streaks of glorious sunshine bursting in through crevices hewn at random in its rugged sides. --George Macaulay Trevelyan

5.8.1.1 Similes Clarify

Similes have many uses. One is to clarify an unfamiliar idea or perception by expressing it in familiar terms:

> ➢ Cold air is heavy; as polar air plows into a region occupied by tropical air . . . it gets underneath the warm air and lifts it up even as it pushes it back. A cold front acts physically *like* a cowcatcher. --Wolfgang Langewiesche

Finding familiar equivalents often involves *concretion,* which is turning an abstraction into an image readers can imaginatively see or hear or touch.

> It has been said, for example, that the plot of one of Thomas Hardy's novels is as complicated as a medieval mousetrap. --Virginia Wooif

Even though few of us have seen a medieval mousetrap, the phrase cleverly suggests a labyrinthine Rube Goldberg contrivance. Occasionally the process may be reversed so that a simile *abstracts,* that is, moves from the concrete to the abstract:

> The taste of that crane soup clung to me all day *like* the memory of an old sorrow dulled by time. --John c. Neihardt

Then the apse [of a medieval cathedral] is pure and beautiful Gothic of the fourteenth century, with very tall and fluted windows *like* single prayers. --Hilaire Belloc

Similes can also be emphatic, especially when they close a sentence or passage, like those by Neihardt and Belloc.

5.8.1.2 Similes Expand the Subject

Most similes—even those whose primary function is to explain— do more than provide a perceptible equivalent of an abstract idea. Any vehicle comes with meanings of its own, and these enter into and enlarge the significance of the tenor. Belloc's phrase "single prayers" does not help us to see the windows of the cathedral. But it does enlarge our conception of those windows, endowing them with the connotations we associate with *prayer:* the upward lift of the spirit, the urge to transcend mortal limits. Here are two other examples of similes rich in implication. The first is about the "what-a-great-war" reminiscences of old soldiers:

The easy phrases covered the cruelties of war, *like* sand blowing in over the graves of their comrades. --Thomas Pakenham

The image suggests the capacity of the mind to obscure the horror of war, even in those, perhaps especially in those, who endured it.

In this second example the novelist Isak Dinesen is discussing life on a farm in South Africa:

> ➢ Sometimes visitors from Europe drifted into the farm *like* wrecked timbers into still waters, turned and rotated, till in the end they were washed out again, or dissolved and sank.

The image implies a great deal about such drifters: their lack of will and purpose, the futility with which they float through life, their incapacity to anchor themselves to anything solid, their inevitable and unmarked disappearance. Clearly, one advantage of similes—and of other figures as well—is economy of meaning. Compressing a range of ideas and feelings into few words, similes deepen prose.

5.8.1.3 Similes Express Feelings and Judgments

Many similes are emotionally charged. Pakenham's image of sand blowing over the graves of fallen soldiers, for example, is heavily freighted with sadness. And in the following figure the naturalist Rachel Carson does more than describe the summer sea; she reveals its beauty:

> ➢ Or again the summer sea may glitter with a thousand moving pinpricks of light, *like* an immense swarm of fireflies moving through a dark wood.

Emotional connotations often involve judgments. The poet Rupert Brooke, writing about a conversation with a salesman, imagines how the man's mind works:

> ➢ The observer could see thoughts slowly floating into it, *like* carp in a pond.

This simile operates on several levels: it translates an abstraction (the process of thinking) into an arresting visual image. It suggests the slowness and ponderousness of this particular mind. And it implies a judgment, even if humorously: this is not a mind the writer admires. One other example, more extended, of a judgmental simile. The historian Barbara Tuchman is talking about the attitudes of English Socialists just before World War I:

> What was needed was a strong [Socialist] party with no nonsense and a businesslike understanding of national needs which would take hold of the future *like* a governess, slap it into clean clothes, wash its face, blow its nose, make it sit up straight at table and eat a proper diet.

Tuchman's image of the bossy nanny nicely conveys the unyielding self-righteousness of some Socialists of the period—their smug self-assurance, their certainty that they alone knew what was best for humanity, and their conviction that it was their duty to impose the truth upon people too childish to know what was good for them. Fairly or not, Tuchman is passing judgment. Her mocking image uncovers the disdain for common people which she senses beneath the Socialists' reforming zeal. The judgments implied by such similes are more than sober, objective opinions. The images by which they are delivered give them great persuasive force. Thus Tuchman plays upon the resentment we carry from childhood against those Brobdingnagian know-it-alls who forced us to live by their rules.

5.8.1.4 Similes Give Pleasure

All good writing gives pleasure. But figurative language is a special delight. Tuchman's simile, reducing imposing Socialists who would reform the world to bossy nannies pontificating in a nursery, is amusing (whether it is fair is something else). Here is another example:

> There are fanatics who love and venerate spelling *as* a tomcat loves and venerates catnip. There are grammatomaniacs; schoolmarms who would rather parse than eat; specialists in the objective case that doesn't exist in English; strange beings, otherwise sane and even intelligent and comely, who surfer under a split infinitive as you and I would suffer under gastroenteritis. --H. L. Mencken

5.8.1.5 Similes Intensify Our Awareness

Finally, beyond their capacity to familiarize the strange, to expand ideas, to express feelings and evaluations, and to give us pleasure, similes have an even greater power. They bring us more intimately in touch with reality by joining diverse experiences. Think about this description of an old woman's hands:

Their touch had no substance, *like* a dry wind on a July afternoon. --Sharon Curtin

Curtin's simile does all the usual things—compares a less familiar experience to a more familiar one, implies something about the loneliness of old age, even passes a judgment on life.

But it does more: it unifies perceptions that most of us would not have put together. Similes may also cut across the boundaries that separate the senses:

There was a glamour in the air, a something in the special flavor of that moment that was *like* the consciousness of Salvation, or the smell of ripe peaches on a sunny wall. --Logan Pearsaii Smith

In that image two disparate sense perceptions blend into a unified experience, and the fused aroma and vision of the peaches and the sunlit wall connect with the writer's consciousness of religious mystery.

5.8.2 Metaphor

Like a simile, a metaphor is also a comparison. The difference is that a simile compares things explicitly; it literally says that X is *like* Y. A metaphor compares things implicitly. Read literally, it does not state that X is like Y; but rather that X *is* Y:

> ➢ Cape Cod is the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts. --Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau writes "is," not "is like." However, we understand that he means the Cape resembles a human arm, not that it really is an arm. The metaphor has simply taken the comparison a step closer and expressed it a bit more economically and forcefully.

A metaphor has the same two parts as a simile: tenor—or the main subject—and vehicle—the image introduced for comparison. In Thoreau's sentence the tenor is "Cape Cod" and the vehicle is "the bared and bended arm." In many metaphors both parts are stated. In some, however, the writer refers only to the vehicle, depending on the context to supply the full comparison. Such a figure is called an *implied* or *fused metaphor,* rather than a full one. Had Thoreau written "the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts" in a context which clearly indicated he meant Cape Cod, his metaphor would have been implied.

It is sometimes argued that metaphors are more powerful figures than similes and even in some ways essentially different. Here we need not assume any greater virtue in metaphors. They are more economical and generally more emphatic. For these reasons they are sometimes preferable to similes. But on some occasions the explicit comparison of a simile is better.

Fused metaphors may involve metonymy. *Metonymy* means substituting for one concept another that is associated with it. The novelist Joseph Conrad, discussing the difficulty of saying exactly what one wants to say, speaks of:

> ➢ the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.

Conrad does not actually say that words are coins, but he implies the full metaphor by the expressions "worn thin" and "defaced," qualities of old coins. The logic of the figure runs like this:

Words are (like) old coins.

Old coins are often worn thin by passing from hand to hand and their faces nearly rubbed away.

Therefore, words can be "worn thin" and "defaced." Another figure often found in metaphors and closely related to metonymy is *synecdoche,* which is substituting a part for the whole, as when a ship is referred to as a "sail." In the following passage the religious revivals staged by the evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson are compared (implicitly) to an amusement park:

> ➢ With rare ingenuity, Aimee kept the Ferris wheels and the merrygoround of religion going night and day. --Carey McWilliams

The logic goes like this:

Aimee's revivals were (like) an amusement park.

An amusement park contains Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds.

Therefore, events at the revivals were (like) Ferris wheels and merrygorounds.

Many metaphors use synecdoche and metonymy. Usually a writer wants to introduce as precise an image as possible into the vehicle of a metaphor, thus appealing immediately to the reader's eyes or ears. "Ferris wheels" and "merry-gorounds," for instance, are easier to visualize than the larger, more abstract "amusement park." And these images are richly meaningful, implying the park in its entirety, as well as evoking vivid pictures of revolving vertical and horizontal wheels.

5.8.2.1 The Uses of Metaphor

Metaphors have the same functions as similes. They clarify the unfamiliar and render abstractions in images:

> ➢ [Science] pronounces only on whatever, at the time, appears to have been scientifically ascertained, which is a small island in an ocean of nescience. --Bertrand Russell

Russell's image of a small island (science) in a wide and lonely sea (all that we do not know) vividly expresses the relationship between knowledge and ignorance.

Metaphors also enrich meaning by implying added dimensions of thought or feeling. Consider all that is suggested by the term "idol" in this metaphor:

> We squat before television, the idol of our cherished progress.--Evelyn Jones

"Idol," signifying a false god, denies the progress television symbolizes and celebrates. The image implies as well the irrationality and subservience of its worshipers. In the next example the judgmental quality of the metaphor is more pronounced. About the ancient Romans, the writer remarks that:

> they were marked by the thumbprint of an unnatural vulgarity, which they never succeeded in surmounting. --Lawrence Durrell

A dirty thumbprint, like one left on a china cup or a white wall—what a graphic signature of crudeness. In the following metaphor the judgment is ironic (the passage concerns Huey Long, a powerful Louisiana politician of the 1930s, who, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate, passed on his governorship to a political crony):

He designated his old benefactor, O. K. Allen of Winnfield, as the apostolic choice for the next full term. --Hodding Carter

"Apostolic," alluding to Christ and his disciples, is a wry comment on Long: on the power he wielded, on the veneration he was accorded by his followers, and perhaps even on how he regarded himself. Like similes, metaphors may be emotionally charged, pleasantly or, as in this example, unpleasantly (the writer is remembering a dose of castor oil forced down him when he was a child):

> . . . a bulge of colorless slime on a giant spoon. --William Gibson

Metaphors are also emphatic, particularly at the end of a statement, where the figure not only clarifies and pictures a complex abstraction, but also strongly restates it, leaving a memorable image in the mind:

> ➤ What distinguishes a black hole from a planet or an ordinary star is that anything falling into it cannot come out of it again. If light cannot escape, nothing else can and it is a perfect trap: a turnstile to oblivion. --Nigel Calder

Finally, metaphors may be extended through several sentences or even an entire paragraph. In fact, exploring and expanding a metaphor can be an effective way of generating a piece of prose. Here is a brief example:

> ➤ Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue. --Eugene O'Neill

And here are two longer ones. The first works out a metaphor comparing *Time* magazine to a tale told to little children:

> ➤ *Time* is also a nursery book in which the reader is slapped and tickled alternately. It is full of predigested pap spooned out with confidential nudges. The reader is never on his own for an instant, but, as though at his mother's knee, he is provided with the right emotions for everything he hears or sees as the pages turn. --Marshall McLuhan

Notice how the metaphor determines the diction: "slapped and tickled," "predigested pap," "spooned out," "nudges," "never on his own," "mother's knee," "provided with." Even the phrase "as the pages turn" suggests the passivity of a child for whom the baby-sitter turns the pages.

The other example of an extended metaphor returns us to the passage with which we began this section, Thoreau's comparison of Cape Cod to a bent arm. The image opens a paragraph in the book *Cape Cod:*

Cape Cod is the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts: the shoulder is at Buzzard's Bay; the elbow, or crazy-bone, at Cape Mallabarre; the wrist at Truro; and the sandy fist at Provincetown—behind which the State stands on her guard, with her back to the Green Mountains, and her feet planted on the floor of the ocean, like an athlete protecting her Bay—boxing with northeast storms, and, ever and anon, heaving up her Atlantic adversary from the lap of the earth—ready to thrust forward her other fist, which keeps guard the while upon her breast at Cape Ann.

The figure organizes the entire paragraph, which develops the image of "the bare and bended arm" both by analysis and by expansion. Thoreau breaks it down into its parts—"elbow," "wrist," "fist"—and applies each of these to Cape Cod. At the same time he expands the metaphor into the larger inclusive image of the boxer—"back," "feet," "other fist," "breast"—connecting each detail with other parts of Massachusetts. If you wish to develop a metaphor (or simile), remember that you can work in either of these ways, or even, like Thoreau, in both: inwardly, differentiating the elements of the image and relating these to your main topic; or outwardly, exploring the larger entity to which the image belongs, as the "bared arm" is a natural part of a boxer in a defensive stance.

5.8.2.2   Finding Metaphors

There is no formula for creating metaphors. Sometimes the literal detail of a scene lends itself to figurative use, as in the following sentence explaining why the writer was not allowed into a large office to observe the regimented life of clerks:

> ➢ I knew those rooms were back there, but I couldn't get past the opaque glass doors any more than I could get past the opaque glass Smiles. --Barbara Carson

Another source of metaphor is metonymy, which describes something in terms of an associated quality. Here is a sentence about the coming of spring in which birdsongs are described

as if they were, themselves, birds:

> The birds have started singing in the valley. Their February squawks and naked chirps are fully fledged now, and long lyrics fly in the air. --Annie Dillard

More often, however, a metaphor or simile involves a comparison which, while apt and revealing, does not grow naturally out of the subject as do the images by Garson and Dillard. For instance one philosopher discusses the style of another like this:

> The style is not, as philosophic style should be, so transparent a medium that one looks straight through it at the object, forgetting that it is there; it is too much like a window of stained glass which, because of its very richness, diverts attention to itself. --Brand Blanshard

But whether a metaphor arises from "inside" the subject or from "outside," its coming depends on imagination. There is no magic for discovering metaphors. It is a talent, and some people are more adept at seeing resemblances than the rest of us. Still, we can all profit from letting our minds run free from inhibitions. In a first draft don't be frightened of a simile or metaphor, even if it sounds far-fetched.

5.8.2.3   Using Metaphors Effectively

When you revise, however, become more detached and critical about figures of speech (as about all phases of your writing). To use metaphors and similes effectively, remember these principles:

Metaphors and Similes Should Be Fresh and Original

Avoid trite figures: "quiet as a mouse," "white as a sheet," "the game of life," "a tower of strength." Clever humorists can make such cliches work for them, but only by playing upon their

staleness. If you can think of nothing more original than "his face was white as a sheet," you are better off saying simply, "His face was very white."

The Vehicle Should Fit the Tenor

The vehicle of any simile or metaphor is likely to have several meanings. Be sure that none of them works against you. It is easy to focus so exclusively on the meaning you want that you overlook others which may spoil the comparison:

> ➢ The town hall has been weathered by cold winds and harsh snows like an old mare turned out to graze.

While an old mare is an image of decrepitude, it has other characteristics which make it unsuitable as a vehicle for a building. Can you imagine a town hall in a pasture, nibbling grass and swatting flies with its tail?

Metaphors and Similes Should Be Appropriate to the Context

Figures of speech have their own levels of formality and informality. Even when it does not possess specifically awkward connotations, a simile or metaphor must not be too colloquial or too learned for the occasion. It would not do to write in a paper for a history professor that "Napoleon went through Russia like a dose of salts."

Metaphors and Similes Should Not Be Awkwardly Mixed

When several similes or metaphors appear in the same passage, they ought to harmonize in thought and image. Mixtures like the following are awkward at best and silly at worst:

> ➢ The moon, a silver coin hung in the draperies of the enchanted night, let fall her glance, which gilded the rooftops with a joyful phosphorescence.

This sounds impressive—until one begins to think about the picture it so lushly describes. If the moon is a "coin" how can "she" "let fall [a] glance"? How can "silver" be used for gilding, which

means to cover with gold? Why mix the three elements of silver, gold, and phosphorus? Can "phosphorescence" be "joyful"? Do "coins" hang in "draperies"? Even dead metaphors and similes must be mixed carefully. Although such expressions no longer have figurative value, they can bring each other embarrassingly to life. The dead metaphors, "mouth of a river" and "leg of a journey," for instance, work well enough alone, but it would be clumsy to write that "the last leg of our journey began at the mouth of the river."

You must be careful, too, about the other, nonfigurative words you use with a simile or metaphor, even when these words are to be read literally. Because this writer was careless with his contextual diction, his metaphor fails:

> ➤ The teacher leaves the students to develop the foundations of their education.

"Foundations," of course, are "built" or "laid," not "developed."

Metaphors and Similes Should Not Be Overworked

Metaphors and similes ought not to be sprinkled about profusely, especially in expository writing. Even when they do not clash, too many are likely to cancel one another. Their effectiveness depends on their being relatively uncommon, for if every other sentence contains a simile or a metaphor, readers soon begin to discount them.

5.8.3 Personification

Personification, really a special kind of metaphor, is referring to inanimate things or to abstractions as if they were human. A simple instance of personification is the use of personal pronouns to refer to objects, as when sailors speak of a ship as "she." Here is a more subtle instance, a description of the social changes in an area of London:

> ➤ As London increased, however, rank and fashion rolled off to the west, and trade,
>
> creeping on at their heels, took possession of their deserted abodes. --Washington Irving

"Rank" and "fashion" signify aristocratic Londoners; "trade" designates the merchant class. These abstractions are personified by the verbs: the aristocrats "roll off" elegantly in carriages, the tradesmen "creep" in with the deference of self-conscious inferiors.

The purpose of personification—like that of metaphor generally— is to explain, expand, vivify:

> ➤ There is a rowdy strain in American life, living close to the surface but running very deep. Like an ape behind a mask it can display itself suddenly with terrifying effect. It is slack-jawed, with leering eyes and loose wet lips, with heavy feet and ponderous cunning hands; now and then when something tickles it, it guffaws, and when it is angry it snarls; and it can be aroused more easily than it can be quieted. Mike Fink and Yankee Doodle helped to father it, and Judge Lynch is one of its creations; and when it comes lumbering forth it can make the whole country step in time to its own irregular pulse beat. --Bruce Catton

Catton's personification (or perhaps "animalification") makes his point with extraordinary clarity and strength: mindless savagery is no abstraction; it is an ever-present menace.

5.8.4 Allusions

An allusion is a brief reference to a well-known person, place, or happening. Sometimes the reference is explicitly identified:

> ➤ As it is, I am like that man in *The Pilgrim's Progress,* by some accounted man, who the more he cast away the more he had. --W. H. Hudson

More often the reference is indirect, and the writer depends on the reader's recognizing the source and significance:

> ➤ We [Western peoples] tend to have a Micawberish attitude toward life, a feeling that so long as we do not get too excited something is certain to turn up. --Barbara Ward

A writer making an allusion should be reasonably sure that it *will* be familiar. Barbara Ward, for instance, could fairly refer to Mr. Micawber, confident that her readers know Dickens's *David Copperfield* well enough to remember Mr. Micawber, burdened by family and debt, yet cheerfully optimistic that some lucky chance will rescue him from ruin.

Some allusions are not to persons, but to well-known passages— a verse from the Bible, say, or a line from Shakespeare. The passage may be paraphrased or quoted literally, although it is not usually enclosed in quotation marks. There is no question of plagiarizing; the writer assumes readers know what he or she is doing. In this sentence, for instance, the allusion is to the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (3:1-8):

I didn't know whether I should appear before you—there is a time to show and a time to hide; there is a time to speak, and also a time to be silent. --Norman O. Brown

While many allusions are drawn from literature, some refer to historical events or people, ancient or more recent:

> These moloch gods, these monstrous states, are not natural beings. . . . [Moloch was an ancient Semitic deity to whom children were sacrificed.] --Suzanne K. Langer

> And it is not opinions or thoughts that *Time* provides its readers as news comment. Rather, the newsreel is provided with a razzle dazzle accompaniment of Spike Jones noises. [Spike Jones was a popular orchestra leader of the 1940s, famous for wacky, comic arrangements of light classics and pop tunes. He used automobile horns, cow bells, steam whistles, and so on.] --Marshall McLuhan

Whatever the source of an allusion, its purpose is to enrich meaning by packing into a few words a complex set of ideas or feelings. Think, for instance, of how much is implied by describing a politician's career as "Napoleonic," or an accident as being "Titanic." But remember

that to work at all, allusions must be (1) appropriate to your point and (2) within the experience of your readers.

5.8.5 Irony

Irony consists of using words in a sense very different from their usual meaning. The simplest case occurs when a term is given its opposite value. Here, for example, a historian describes a party at the court of the English king James I:

> ➢ Later the company flocked to the windows to look into the palace courtyard below. Here a vast company had already assembled to watch the King's bears fight with greyhounds, and mastiffs bait a tethered bull. These delights were succeeded by tumblers on tightropes and displays of horsemanship. --C.P.V. Akrigg

By "delights" we are expected to understand "abominations," "detestable acts of cruelty." In subtler form, irony plays more lightly over words, pervading an entire passage rather than twisting any single word into its opposite. An instance occurs in this sentence (the writer is commenting on the decline of the medieval ideal of the knight):

> ➢ In our end of time the chevalier has become a Knight of Pythias, or Columbus, or the Temple, who solemnly girds on sword and armor to march past his own drugstore. --Morris Bishop

None of Bishop's words means its reverse; the sentence is to be read literally. Still, Bishop intends us to smile at contemporary men playing at knighthood. The irony lies in the fact that some of the words ought *not* to be taken literally. Twentieth-century businessmen ought not to "solemnly gird on sword and armor," blithely unaware of the disparity between knightly ideals and modern life.

Disparity is the common denominator in both these examples of irony: the difference between the ideal and the actual, between what we profess and what we do, between what we expect and what we get. In stressing such disparities, irony is fundamentally different from simile and metaphor, which build upon similarity. The whole point of irony is that things are *not* what they seem or what they should be or what we want them to be. They are different.

Irony reveals the differences in various ways. One is by using words in a double sense, making them signify both the ideal and the actual ("delights"). Another is by juxtaposing images of what could be (or once was) and of what is (the chevalier girding on his sword and the neighborhood druggist). Either way, we are made conscious of the gap between "ought" and "is": people *ought* to treat dumb animals kindly; they *do* take pleasure in torturing them. The writer employing irony must be sure that his or her readers will understand the special value of the words. Sometimes one can depend on the general knowledge and attitudes of the audience. The ironic sense of Akrigg's "delights" is clear because modern readers know that such amusements are not delightful. But sometimes irony must be signaled, as in this passage by the historian Barbara Tuchman (she is discussing the guilt of the Nazi leaders):

> ➢ When it comes to guilt, a respected writer—respected in some circles— has told us, as her considered verdict on the Nazi program, that evil is banal—a word that means something so ordinary that you are not bothered by it; the dictionary definition is "commonplace and hackneyed." Somehow that conclusion does not seem adequate or even apt. Of *course,* evil is commonplace; of *course* we all partake of it. Does that mean that we must withhold disapproval, and that when evil appears in dangerous degree or vicious form we must not condemn but only understand?

The specifically ironic words are "respected" and "considered verdict." The first is cued by the qualification "respected in some circles," with its barbed insinuation: "respected, but not by you

or me." "Considered verdict" is pushed into irony not so much by any particular cue as by the total context. If "banality" is the only judgment the other writer can make, her judgment—Tuchman suggests—is hardly worth considering. "Verdict" has another ironic overtone. The word signifies a judicial decision, and Tuchman implies that her opponent is presumptuous in delivering a verdict as if she were judge and jury.

In other ways, too, Tuchman reveals her feelings and thus contributes to the tone of irony. The repetition of the italicized "of course" implies the commonplaceness of the ideas. And the rhetorical question, stressing the undeniable truth of Tuchman's point, underscores the folly she is attacking.

Irony may be used in a variety of tones. Some irony is genial, amusing and amused, like that by Morris Bishop. Some is more serious (Akrigg) or even angry (Tuchman). But whatever its tone, irony contributes significantly to a writer's persona. It is a form of comment—though an oblique form. Thus it represents an intrusion of the writer into the writing. He or she stands forth, moreover, in a special way: as a subtle, complex, witty presence, deliberately using intellect to distance emotion. This does not mean that irony diminishes emotion. On the contrary: irony acts like a lens, concentrating the emotions focused through it. But it does mean that irony constrains emotion rather than allowing it to gush. Irony, finally, may function in prose in two ways: (1) as a specific figure of speech, a device for expressing a particular judgment; or (2) as a mode of thought, an encompassing vision of people and events. In this broad aspect irony is the stance some writers take toward life. They alone may properly be described as ironists. The rest of us, though we are not ironists in this deeper sense, can profitably use irony now and then.

5.8.6 Overstatement and Understatement

Overstatement and understatement are special kinds of irony. Each depends on the disparity between the reality the writer describes and the words he or she uses. Overstatement

exaggerates the subject, magnifying it beyond its true dimensions. Understatement takes the opposite tack: the words are intentionally inadequate to the reality.

5.8.6.1 Overstatement

The rhetorical name for overstatement is *hyperbole,* from a Greek word meaning "excess." Loosely speaking, there are two kinds of overstatement: comic and serious. Like caricature, comic hyperbole ridicules or burlesques by enlargement. Comic overstatement has deep roots in American literature. It is a major element in the tall tales told by such folk heroes as Mike Fink and Davey Crockett. Much of Mark Twain's humor depends on overstatement. Here, for instance, is a passage from his essay "The Awful German Language," included in *A Tramp Abroad:*

> ➢ An average sentence in a German newspaper, is a sublime and impressive curiosity; it occupies a quarter of a column; it contains all the ten parts of speech—not in regular order, but mixed; it is built mainly of compound words constructed by the writer on the spot, and not to be found in any dictionary—six or seven words compacted into one, without joint or seam—that is, without hyphens; it treats of fourteen or fifteen different subjects, each inclosed in a parenthesis of its own, with here and there extra parentheses which reinclose three or four of the minor parentheses, making pens within pens: finally, all the parentheses and reparentheses are massed together between a couple of king-parentheses, one of which is placed in the first line of the majestic sentence and the other in the middle of the last line of it—after which comes the VERB, and you find out for the first time what the man has been talking about; and after the verb—merely by way of ornament, as far as I can make out—the writer shovels in *"haben sindgewesen gehabt haben geworden sein,"* or words to that effect, and the monument is finished.

Serious overstatement differs only in its end, which is persuasion rather than laughter. The writer may wish to impress us with the value of something or to shock us into seeing a hard truth. Shock is the tactic of H. L. Mencken, who cudgels what he regarded as the venality, stupidity, and smugness of life in the 1920s:

> ➢ It is . . . one of my firmest and most sacred beliefs, reached after an enquiry extending over a score of years and supported by incessant prayer and meditation, that the government of the United States, in both its legislative arm and its executive arm, is ignorant, incompetent, corrupt, and disgusting—and from this judgment I except no more than twenty living lawmakers and no more than twenty executioners of their laws. It is a belief no less piously cherished that the administration of justice in the Republic is stupid, dishonest, and against all reason and equity—and from this judgment I except no more than thirty judges, including two upon the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States. It is another that the foreign policy of the United States—its habitual manner of dealing with other nations, whether friend or foe, is hypocritical, disingenuous, knavish, and dishonorable—and from this judgment I consent to no exception whatever, either recent or long past. And it is my fourth (and, to avoid too depressing a bill, final) conviction that the American people, taking one with another, constitute the most timorous, sniveling, poltroonish, ignominious mob of serfs and goose-steppers ever gathered under one flag in Christendom since the end of the Middle Ages, and that they grow more timorous, more sniveling, more poltroonish, more ignominious every day.

Comic or serious, overstatement relies on several devices. It likes the superlative forms of adjectives, the hugest numbers, the longest spans of time, extremes of all sorts. It prefers sweeping generalizations: *every, all, always, never, none.* It admits few quali6cations or disclaimers, and if it does qualify, it may turn the concession into another exaggerated claim

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(like Mencken's "and from this judgment I except no more than twenty living lawmakers"). It rides upon words with strong emotional connotations like "sniveling," "poltroonish," "ignominious," "knavish." Its sentence structure is likely to be emphatic, with strong rhythms and frequent repetitions. Short statements are stressed by being set beside longer ones. In the hands of writers like Twain or Mencken, overstatement is powerful rhetoric, shocking, infuriating, hilarious. But this very power is a limitation. Overstatement is hard to take for very long and quickly loses its capacity to shock or amuse. Even worse, overstatement like Mencken's is often abused. It is, after all, assertion, not reasoned argument, and it easily degenerates into shrill name-calling.

5.8.6.2   Understatement

Understatement stresses importance by seeming to deny it. Like overstatement it can be comic or serious. Twain is being funny in this passage:

> ➢ I have been strictly reared, but if it had not been so dark and solemn and awful there in that vast, lonely room, I do believe I should have said something which could not be put into a Sunday-school book without injuring the sale of it.

But here is a more serious case:

> ➢ Last week I saw a woman flayed alive, and you will hardly believe how it altered her appearance for the worse. --Jonathan Swift

Understatement works a paradox: increasing emotional impact by carefully avoiding emotive language. It is a species of irony in that the deeper value of the words differs from their surface meaning. Swift's phrase "altered her appearance for the worse" seems woefully inadequate: no streaming blood, no frenzied screams, no raw, quivering flesh—just that "it altered her appearance for the worse." But Swift tricks us into imagining the scene for ourselves, and this makes the brutality real.

> ➤ In the following paragraph Ernest Hemingway increases horror by denying the horrible, writing as if a cold-blooded execution were just routine. Which in time of war it is; *and that's the horror.* They shot the cabinet ministers at half-past six in the morning against the wall of the hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. There were wet dead leaves on the paving of the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain. They tried to hold him up against the wall but he sat down in a puddle of water. The other five stood very quietly against the wall. Finally, the officer told the soldiers it was no good trying to make him stand up. When they fired the first volley he was sitting down in the water with his head on his knees.

Sometimes words are unequal to reality. Then understatement may be the best strategy, rendering the event in simple, direct language:

> ➤ In the heart of the city near the buildings of the Prefectural Government and at the intersection of the busiest streets, everybody had stopped and stood in a crowd gazing up at three parachutes floating down through the blue air. The bomb exploded several hundred feet above their heads. The people for miles around Hiroshima, in the fields, in the mountains, and on the bay, saw a light that was brilliant even in the sun, and felt heat.
> --Alexander H. Leighton

A special form of understatement is *litotes,* a term sometimes used as a synonym for understatement in general. More narrowly it means emphasizing a positive by doubling a negative as when we express admiration for a difficult shot in tennis by exclaiming, "Not bad," or stress someone's bravery by saying that he "did not play the coward." Whatever we call it, understatement is a powerful figure of speech. To naive readers it sometimes seems callous or

insensitive: some of Swift's contemporaries, for example, thought his irony to be mere cruelty. But when it really connects with subject and reader, understatement is more explosive than hyperbole.

5.8.7 Puns

A pun is a word employed in two or more senses, or a word used in a context that suggests a second term sounding like it. In either case the two meanings must interact, usually, though not necessarily, in a humorous way. In the first of the two following examples, the pun depends on different senses of the same word; in the second, on one word's sounding like another:

> ➢ A cannon-ball took off his legs, so he laid down his arms. --Thomas Hood
>
> ➢ During the two previous centuries musical styles went in one era and out of the other. . . .
>   --Frank Muir

While puns resemble irony in simultaneously using words in different senses, they differ in important ways. For one thing, a pun is today almost exclusively a device of humor (though in earlier centuries poets and dramatists often employed puns for serious meanings). Here, for instance, Mark Twain makes a joke by punning on the expression "raising chickens":

> ➢ Even as a schoolboy poultry-raising was a study with me, and I may say without egotism that as early as the age of seventeen I was acquainted with all the best and speediest methods of raising chickens, from raising them off a roost by burning Lucifer matches under their noses, down to lifting them off a fence on a frosty night by insinuating a warm board under their feet.

For another thing, puns reveal unexpected connections. In this they are less like irony than like simile and metaphor. A good pun not only amuses us, but also points to unrealized similarities. The humorist S. J. Perelman entitles one collection of essays *The Road to Miltown, or Under*

the Spreading Atrophy (Miltown was the brand name of a popular tranquilizer.) Punning on "a tree," the word "atrophy" echoes a famous phrase of sentimental poetry, "under the spreading chestnut tree"; and the participle "spreading" acquires a sinister implication, far removed from the pleasant connotations it has in Longfellow's poem, "The Village Blacksmith." In an age given to the wholesale swallowing of tranquilizers, atrophy may indeed be spreading. Because they became a sign of "low" humor in the late nineteenth century, many people consider puns unseemly in anything but avowedly humorous writing. That judgment is a bit harsh. A bad pun *is* regrettable. But a good pun—one both clever and revealing—is worth making.

5.8.8 Zeugma

Zeugma (pronounced ZOOG-ma) is a special kind of pun involving a verb used with two or more objects, but with a difference of meaning. Here the novelist Lawrence Durrell is describing the plight of a maiden chased by lustful monks:

> ➤ Joanna, pursued by the three monks, ran about the room, leaping over tables and chairs, sometimes throwing a dish or a scriptural maxim at her pursuers.

And here is a wry definition of a piano:

> ➤ **Piano,** n. A parlor utensil for subduing the impenitent visitor. It is operated by depressing the keys of the machine and the spirits of the audience. --Ambrose Bierce

Zeugma, like puns generally, is a comic figure of speech. It is witty and amusing, and increases meaning by linking disparities. Durrell's pairing of dishes and scriptural maxims reveals their equal inefficacy in Joanna's plight.

5.8.9 Imagery

An image is a word or expression that speaks directly to one or more of the senses, as in this description of the Seine in Paris:

> ➤ The river was brown and green—olive-green under the bridges— and a rainbow-coloured scum floated at the sides. --Jean Rhys

Images are classified according to the sense to which they primarily appeal. Visual images, like those in the sentence above, are the most common. Next in frequency, probably, are auditory images, directed to the ear:

> ➤ The [medieval] house lacked air, light, and *comfort moderne;* but people had little taste for privacy. They lived most of their lives on the streets, noisy indeed by day, with pounding hammers, screaming saws, clattering wooden shoes, street cries of vendors of goods and services, and the hand bells of pietists, summoning all to pray for the souls of the dead. --Morris Bishop

Images can appeal to other senses: to smell, taste, touch, even to the muscular sense of movement and balance (these are called kinesthetic images). Here, for example, is an indictment of the odors of a modern city:

> ➤ . . . [T]he reek of gasoline exhaust, the sour smell of a subway crowd, the pervasive odor of a garbage dump, the sulphurous fumes of a chemical works, the carbolated rankness of a public lavatory . . . the chlorinated exudation of ordinary drinking water. . . . --Lewis Mumford

Often an image stimulates two or more senses simultaneously, though it is directed primarily to one. Thus in Rhys's sentence about the Seine, the imagery, while essentially visual, also suggests the feel of the water and the smell of the scum. At their simplest, images re-create sensory experience. Bishop makes us "hear" a medieval city. In the following passage the writer "images" the experience of walking in a small stream:

> Exploring a streambed can be done on a purely sensual level. How it all feels—moss, wet rock, soft mud under feet; cold fast mountain water or the touch of a sun-warmed gentle brook; water wrapping itself around your ankles or knees, swirling in little eddies, sparkling in small pools, rushing away white and foamy over rapids, or calmly meandering over glistening pebbles. --Ruth Rudner

Rudner's description also shows how images may be mixed to appeal to several senses. Many of her words are tactile: "soft mud under feet," "the touch of a sun-warmed gentle brook," "water wrapping itself around your ankles or knees." Others are visual: "moss, wet rock," "swirling in little eddies," "sparkling," "glistening pebbles." Still others, kinesthetic: "swirling" again, "rushing away," "calmly meandering." But images can be stretched to signify more than sensual experience. Here, for instance, is a description of a California landscape, scene of a murderous love affair:

> The lemon groves are sunken, down a three- or four-foot retaining wall, so that one looks directly into their foliage, too lush, too unsettlingly glossy, the greenery of nightmare; the fallen eucalyptus bark is too dusty, a place for snakes to breed. --Joan Didion

Literally these images describe the trees and the barkstrewn ground. Yet they suggest unnaturalness and evil too, a morbid aura of death. We cannot say that they "mean" evil and death, as we may say that the vehicle of a metaphor signifies the thing for which it stands. Nonetheless the images have overtones that give the passage a sinister vibrato.

At times this sort of implication is carried so far that an image acquires symbolic value, rendering a complex, abstract idea in a sharp perception. At the end of the following sentence the novelist and essayist George Orwell turns an image into a symbol of judgment:

> When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases—*bestial atrocities, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand*

> *shoulder to shoulder*—one often has the curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them.

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Section 6: Writing the Research

6.1 Introduction

The word "research" is both a noun and a verb. It was first used in the 16th century to mean "the act of searching closely," and as a verb it means to "seek out, search closely" (Harper, 2001). We do research every time we look for a hotel, or for a plumber to fix our bathroom. In academic terms, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines research as the creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications (OECD, n.d.). Research is often assumed to be scientific research although that's not always the case. The other word that's often used for research is inquiry. According to Aristotle, research or inquiry finds and produces "a demonstration of whatever admits of demonstration, and if something does not admit of demonstration, to make this evident also" [Ref from Prior Analytics]. The result of that research and inquiry, which usually takes the shape of written product such as a thesis, dissertation, journal article, book Section or report, is what this module seeks to support. It is not a module about the research process itself, although a particular process may determine the nature of the writing. Regardless of the goals or the research, the written product needs to be crafted to faithfully and persuasively communicate the results of the research. An article that is poorly written will not only fail to get published, it also obscures what the research seeks to accomplish and reflects on the quality of the research. The process of writing itself also benefits the writer in various ways (Lester & James D. Lester, 2002):

6.1.1 Writing Research Teaches How to do Research

Research is something that cannot be done from the side-lines. Research is done by investing time and effort, by immersing fully in it and writing up and documenting the results of all that

work. Writing up the research requires reading and other research activities that help the researcher discover new knowledge, reformulate existing understanding, or gain new insights. The process of writing, articulating claims, defending one's position and collecting evidence in the written product enables the researcher to synthesize ideas and make discoveries.

6.1.2 Enhances Investigative Skills

The writing process requires the researcher to investigate the subject, grasp its essentials and report findings. In order to accomplish these tasks, the researcher needs to negotiate various sources of information, from books to journals, computer databases to archives, and of course, sources on the Internet. The researcher will need to evaluate the credibility of these sources of information and be familiar on to how to work with digital resources.

6.1.3 Writing Research Nurtures Critical Thinking

As researchers wade through numerous sources, they will need to discriminate between useful information and unfounded or ill-conceived findings. Reading and writing critically means questioning existing assumptions and learning to skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze and synthesize the information gathered in order to generate sound, precise and insightful conclusions.

6.1.4 Writing Research Teaches Logical Argumentation

The paper you are writing is asking for your perceptive judgment about the topic you are researching. Based on the wisdom you have gained from your research, you are expected to produce well-reasoned arguments, logically persuade your readers, make a strong point and solve problems. To do so, you will need to present your claims and support them with logical reasons and evidence.

6.2   Goals and Characteristics of Research

The University of South Queensland, Faculty of Arts Research and Research Degrees Committee defines research as:

"Research is taken to mean systematic and rigorous investigation aimed at the discovery of previously unknown phenomena, the development of explanatory theory and its application to new situations or problems, and the construction of original works of significant intellectual merit."

Charles Kettering, the famous inventor says:

Research is an effort to do things better and not to be caught asleep at the switch. It is the problem-solving mind as contrasted to the let-well-enough-alone mind. It is the tomorrow mind instead of the yesterday mind.

The goals of research can therefore be defined as the process of discovery and creation of knowledge (as in "increasing the stock of knowledge"). In this context, RMIT defined the research publication, the result of writing and making public the research, is characterized by:

1. Scholarly activity, as evidenced by discussion of the relevant literature, an awareness of the history and antecedents of work described, and a format which allows a reader to trace sources of the work through citations, footnotes etc;

2. Originality, that is, it is not just a compilation of existing works;

3. Veracity/validity through a peer validation processes or by satisfying the commercial publisher or gallery processes;

4. Increasing the stock of knowledge; and being in a form that enables dissemination of knowledge.

6.3 Strategy and Style

Purpose, the end you're aiming at, determines strategy and style. Strategy involves choice—selecting particular aspects of a topic to develop, deciding how to organize them, choosing this word rather than that, constructing various types of sentences, building paragraphs. Style is the result of strategy, the language that makes the strategy work.

Think of purpose, strategy, and style in terms of increasing abstractness. Style is immediate and obvious. It exists in the writing itself; it is the sum of the actual words, sentences, paragraphs. Strategy is more abstract, felt beneath the words as the immediate ends they serve. Purpose is even deeper, supporting strategy and involving not only what you write about but how you affect readers.

A brief example will clarify these overlapping concepts. It was written by a college student in a fifteen-minute classroom exercise. The several topics from which the students could choose were stated broadly—"marriage," "parents," "teachers," and so on—so that each writer had to think about restricting and organizing his or her composition. This student chose "marriage":

> ➤ Why get married? Or if you are modern, why live together? Answer: Insecurity. "Man needs woman; woman needs man." However, this cliche fails to explain need. How do you need someone of the opposite sex? Sexually is an insufficient explanation. Other animals do not stay with a mate for more than one season; some not even that long. Companionship, although a better answer, is also an incomplete explanation. We all have several friends. Why make one friend so significant that he at least partially excludes the others? Because we want to "join our lives." But this desire for joining is far from "romantic"—it is selfish. We want someone to share our lives in order that we do not have to endure hardships alone.

The writer's purpose is not so much to tell us of what she thinks about marriage as to convince us that what she thinks is true. Her purpose, then, is persuasive, and it leads to particular strategies both of organization and of sentence style. Her organization is a refinement of a conventional question/ answer strategy: a basic question ("Why get married?"); an initial, inadequate answer ("Insecurity"); a more precise question ("How do we need someone?"); a partial answer ("sex"); then a second partial answer ("companionship"); a final, more precise question ("Why make one friend so significant?"); and a concluding answer ("so that we do not have to endure hardships alone").

6.3.1 Strategy

The persuasive purpose is also reflected in the writer's strategy of short emphatic sentences. They are convincing, and they establish an appropriate informal relationship with readers. Finally, the student's purpose determines her strategy in approaching the subject and in presenting herself. About the topic, the writer is serious without becoming pompous. As for herself, she adopts an impersonal point of view, avoiding such expressions as "I think" or "it seems to me." On another occasion they might suggest a pleasing modesty; here they would weaken the force of her argument. These strategies are effectively realized in the style: in the clear rhetorical questions, each immediately followed by a straightforward answer; and in the short uncomplicated sentences, echoing speech. (There are even two sentences that are grammatically incomplete—"Answer: Insecurity" and "because we want to 'join our lives.' ") At the same time the sentences are sufficiently varied to achieve a strategy fundamental to all good prose—to get and hold the reader's attention.

Remember several things about strategy. First, it is many-sided. Any piece of prose displays not one but numerous strategies—of organization, of sentence structure, of word choice, of point of view, of tone. In effective writing these reinforce one another. Second, no absolute one-to-one correspondence exists between strategy and purpose. A specific strategy may be adapted to

various purposes. The question/answer mode of organizing, for example, is not confined to persuasion: it is often used in informative writing. Furthermore, a particular purpose may be served by different strategies. In our example the student's organization was not the only one possible. Another writer might have organized using a "list" strategy:

> ➤ People get married for a variety of reasons. First. . . Second . . . Third . . . Finally . . .

Still another might have used a personal point of view, or taken a less serious approach, or assumed a more formal relationship with the reader.

6.3.2 Style

In its broadest sense "style" is the total of all the choices a writer makes concerning words and their arrangements. In this sense style may be good or bad—good if the choices are appropriate to the writer's purpose, bad if they are not. More narrowly, "style" has a positive, approving sense, as when we say that someone has "style" or praise a writer for his or her "style." More narrowly yet, the word may also designate a particular way of writing, unique to a person or characteristic of a group or profession: "Hemingway's style," "an academic style."

Here we use *style* to mean something between those extremes. It will be a positive term, and while we speak of errors in style, we don't speak of "bad styles." On the other hand, we understand "style" to include many ways of writing, each appropriate for some purposes, less so for others. There is no one style, some ideal manner of writing at which all of us should aim. Style is flexible, capable of almost endless variation. But one thing style is not: it is not a superficial fanciness brushed over the basic ideas. Rather than the gilding, style is the deep essence of writing.

6.3.3 Research Strategies

Research can take many forms and cover different topics. For writing purposes, it is important for the researcher to understand the different research strategies that are often applied. Some

of these strategies are used more often than others (Swales & Feak, 2012) and have been useful in building careers of researchers as well as their list of publications.

1. Some researchers spend a lot of time on gathering data and information for the research and then quickly write the paper from notes, data sources and outlines without much forethought given to the plan of the paper.

2. Many researchers refer to one or more "model" papers or exemplars in their discipline, paying attention to how the papers are organized, how points are made and defended and where and why illustrations are provided. By doing so, these researchers bank on the winning "recipe" of the model papers to get their own papers published.

3. Most younger researchers rely on their PhD advisors and mentors who "know the ropes" and can anticipate how a particular written text might be received by a particular journal or set of reviewers and readers. They often offer advice on which journal or conference a paper might be submitted to and why.

4. Many researchers rely on their mentors, colleagues and friends who are either in the field or outside of their field to help with the phraseology and construction of their sentences and arguments. Others find useful phraseology from published sources or the Internet and use it to string their ideas together.

5. Most researchers develop a sense of anticipated audience for the paper and by doing so, are sensitive to what needs to be and what does not need to be said.

6. After reading their papers, or getting feedback from reviewers, researchers recognize the need for some stylistic variation, or change in tone, and work on acquiring the linguistic resources to achieve this transformation.

7. All researchers focus on their sentence-level grammar because that is the first important aspect of getting your ideas and claims across. After perfecting the grammar, researchers examine the rhetorical style of their sentences in order to be persuasive and convincing.

Younger researchers rely first on strategies (3) and (4) and go on to strategy (2) when writing. Researchers that rely on strategy (1) usually don't progress far with their study or in publishing their work. All researchers typically get assistance using strategy (4) while all researchers need to consider strategy (5) before even starting to write. This is the goal of the next section.

6.4 Considering the Audience

(Mostly from Rawlins (2002), White and Billings (2002), Lester and James D. Lester (2002)
Bad writers think of writing as the mechanical process of putting together the "right" content and format (correct spelling, nice outline and structure, a thesis statement, sufficient vocabulary and complicated documentation of sources and evidence). As a result, it produces a writing that's made up of bits and pieces that will hardly hold together, much less, flow effortlessly as it is read. *Good writers set out to do something to the reader*. Good writers can do anything they want to the reader: surprise the reader, convince the reader that you're right, make the reader feel the same excitement that you do about a topic, or even move the reader to tears. In academic writing, it's mostly about getting the reader to agree with your point of view. You know you've succeeded as a writer when the reviewer agrees with you and is impressed with your claims or evidence. In other words, writing a research paper has as much to do with getting to the root of the matter as it is persuading someone about the matter. Sometimes less is more, because by giving less, the reader is motivated to search for the main points themselves, which makes the writing more interesting and convincing. It becomes convincing not because the writer spells out everything, but because the reader finds it. Sometimes more is better because spelling it out makes it easier on the reader. The writing therefore depends on getting a sense of

the reader. So instead of asking yourself, "What should I write?" or "What are the rules?" you should be asking "What works? What does my reader want? What am I trying to do to her?"

The traditional way of structuring an essay is to first "tell them what you want to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them." So the conclusion is a summary of the essay. With the audience in mind, the essay doesn't have to be written in this way. You can ask yourself, "Does my reader want or need a summary? Will a summary conclusion read well? Will the conclusion persuade the reader? Since the reader still remembers what you've written, the reader might not appreciate you telling them again. Summary conclusions don't persuade the reader.

All writers have people who can read their work and tell them how it reads and perhaps advise them on how to improve their writing. Unfortunately, either those people are not available given the time you have, or even if they are available, they will not read every single line. You can get the same effect by creating an imaginary reader in your head. As you write every line, imagine a first time reader reading it and try to guess how that reader will respond to your sentence. The more you hear in your head your readers' responses, the better you can decide how to react to and edit your sentence appropriately, and the better you'll write. For example, after writing "A study of project teams finds more than half of their interaction consist of information communications", imagine the reader asking, "What's an informal communication? What kind of interaction are we talking about? When was the study done?" If you write, "Changing the team is a humongous task," the reader might say, "This person talks like a kid," or "That's not very scholarly." People can be unpredictable, often over critical and even mean. But that doesn't mean that you have to do everything the reader wants you to. You just have to know that the reader doesn't have to feel the same way and as a writer, or doesn't see it your way. The reader doesn't have to be pleases *all the time*, she just needs to be able to look back and say, "Oh, I see why the writer decided to do it that way."

A good writer anticipates the reader. A good writer doesn't ask herself what to write next. A good writer asks herself what the reader will say in response and then write what she wants to say in response to that. Writing is not the same as talking face-to-face. Body language and intonations help the reader understand what's been said. In writing, we need some assurance that the reader is not asleep, bored or tired of reading. We need to keep the reader interested with our writing. We can do this by causing the reaction we set out to create, and then work with that reaction, by listening to it, reacting to it, addressing it and honoring it.

Good writers give readers everything they need in order to read the writing well. Because readers are busy with lots of tasks concurrently, it's the job of the writer to assist the reader with their many tasks:

1. Readers are summarizing – Give them an essay that's summarizable.

2. They are trying to see what they use the writing for – Ask the reader, "What good is it to them?"—so you must give them something they can use.

3. Readers are trying to understand how you got to your conclusion – So you must include the evidence and reasoning that took you there.

4. They are trying to connect with you – So you have to be human on the page. Tell the story behind the research, find common ground.

Good writing is a performance because the writer feels the presence of the reader the same way the performance feels the audience. Sometimes, by reading aloud helps because you'll write well only something you'd love to read aloud.

When writing for an academic audience go through this checklist to make sure the audience is being considered:

1. Identify the audience – visualize the audience, its expertise and its expectations. The writer's perception of the reader will shape the voice, style, and choice of words in the

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writing. A paper arguing for the early release of prisoners will be different when written for

the justice system compared to the one written for the families of those incarcerated. The

readers of the research on social issues will expect analysis pointing towards some kind of

social theory or solution. Readers of technological issues will expect analysis pointing

towards some technological innovation or discovery. Readers of a business report on

advertising will expect statistical evidence of the effectiveness of a campaign.

2. Identify your discipline and your role as a researcher – readers in every discipline will bring

   different expectations when reading the paper and will expect specific content, language,

   design and documentation format. As a researcher in your discipline, make the paper *your*

   paper and discourse, not a collection of quotations from others or stringing together findings

   or other researchers' discoveries. As a researcher in your discipline, your role is to

   investigate, explain, argue the issues and defend your ideas or claims in your paper, using

   appropriate evidence and authorities.

3. Meet the needs of your readers – are you saying something worth reading? Something

   new? Something surprising? Don't bore the readers with known facts or Wikipedia type

   content. Write to entertain yourself and you will find your readers entertained.

4. Engage and even challenge your readers – find an interesting point of view or a different

   perspective that challenge existing assumptions or beliefs and then ask the reader to

   engage in what you're trying to say. The passion for your research should be clearly seen in

   your writing.

6.5 Purpose of Research

If the purpose of research is to persuade, then we are concerned, as Aristotle says, with the

modes of persuasion. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the

available means of persuasion." There are three means of effecting persuasion: (1) by

reasoning logically (logos), (2) by understanding human character and goodness in their various forms (ethos), and (3) by understanding emotions-that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited (pathos). A statement is persuasive and credible either because it is directly self-evident or because it appears to be proved from other statements that are so. In either case it is persuasive because there is somebody whom it persuades.

These forms of persuasion are categorized by Alexander Bain and Adams Sherman Hill into three forms of literary art or modes of composition: Description, Narration, Exposition and Argument. The OWL Purdue Writing Lab describes these modes of composition as Essays, which are defined as academic writing meant to test or examine ideas concerning a particular topic. The word comes from a French form of the Latin verb exigere, which means "to examine, test, or (literally) to drive out." They are often described as shorter pieces of writing that require the student to hone a number of skills such as close reading, analysis, comparison and contrast, persuasion, conciseness, clarity, and exposition. Sometimes, essays are seen as the opposite of research studies because essays are viewed as an attempt to accomplish something, whereas research studies are considered original research that applies methods (experiment, interviewers, etc.) to collect raw data that is analyzed to produce results and conclusions. This difference takes us back to the definition of research introduced at the beginning of this Section. Research is defined as "The act of searching closely" or creative work undertaken in a systemic manner. Since essays can also accomplish these goals, we can conclude that research studies can incorporate essays and essays can become research studies.

6.5.1 Description

The writer brings before the mind of the reader persons or things as they appear to the writer, but always taking into consideration the readers level, not assuming anything. When describing a place, the writer must start with some known locality or reference.

6.5.2 Narration

In narrations, the writer deals with acts or events and tells a story about them. Historians use lots of narration but also starts by some assumed knowledge of the reader.

6.5.3 Exposition

Exposition deals with whatever that admits of analysis or requires explanation. This essay is closest to the definition of a research study. In other words, exposition is the composition of science and requires demonstration in some kind of order that make sense to the reader, often requiring reference to other resources. In exposition, order is crucial: the main points should be foregrounded and emphasized, and what is subordinate or incidental should be placed in subordination.

6.5.4 Argument

Argument deals with any material that may be used to convince the understanding or to affect the will. The purpose of argument is to influence opinion or action, or both.

Two or more of these modes of discourse can be found in a single paper. Description often runs into narration, and narration into description: a paragraph may be descriptive in form and narrative in purpose, or narrative in form and descriptive in purpose. Exposition always applies description; and it may be of service to any kind of description, to narration, or to argument.

The expository essay is a genre of essay that requires the student to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, expound on the idea, and set forth an argument concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. This can be accomplished through comparison and contrast, definition, example, the analysis of cause and effect, etc.

With the superficial difference between essays and research studies out of the way, we can now describe kinds of research papers. Journals often categorize essays into different types of manuscripts. It is important that authors comply with those requirements in order to increase the

likelihood of getting published. The table below shows examples of manuscripts accepted by three major journals in different disciplines and describes their required contents.

	Science Journal	Nature Journal	MIS Quarterly
Research Article	Categorized under "Original research", the "Research Article" category presents a major advance in science in about 5 pages and 4,500 words	The "Article" category original reports whose conclusions represent a substantial advance in understanding of an important problem and have immediate, far-reaching implications, written in 5 pages and 3,000 words	The "Research Article" category makes a contribution that is sufficiently original and significant so as to warrant a full-length article, written in up to 40 pages
Review	The "Reviews" category describes and synthesizes recent developments of interdisciplinary significance and highlight future directions. This category is often solicited and can be up to 6,000 words long.	"Reviews" focus on one topical aspect of a field rather than providing a comprehensive literature survey and can be controversial, but in this case should briefly indicate opposing viewpoints. It is often commissioned and can be up to 8 pages long	The "Theory and Review" article promotes research by surveying and synthesizing prior theoretical and empirical research or by making new theoretical contributions in particular topic areas. Up to 60 pages.
Perspectives	Categorized under "Commentary" section of the journal, the "Perspectives" article (up to 1000 words plus 1 figure) highlights recent exciting research, but does not primarily discuss the author's own work. It may provide context for the findings within a field or explain potential interdisciplinary significance.	"Perspective" articles are intended to provide a forum for authors to discuss models and ideas from a personal viewpoint. They are more forward-looking and/or speculative than Reviews and may take a narrower field of view. They may be opinionated but should remain balanced and are intended to stimulate discussion and new experimental approaches.	The "Issues and Opinions" category provides a forum for the communication of well-developed and well-articulated position statements concerning emerging, paradoxical, or controversial research issues. It may be described as rigorously argued, and should open new areas of discourse, close stale areas, and/or offer fresh views on research topics of importance to the

			discipline. Up to 25 pages.
Letters	Categorized under the "Commentary" section of the journal, "Letters" (up to 300 words) discuss material published in Science in the last 3 months or issues of general interest. Letters may be reviewed. The author of a paper in question is usually given an opportunity to reply. Also categorized under Commentaries are "Technical Comments" (up to 1000 words, which are published online and discuss the core conclusions and/or methodology of research published in *Science*. The abstract (60 words or less) will be included in the Letters section of the print edition.	"Letters" are short reports of original research focused on an outstanding finding whose importance means that it will be of interest to scientists in other fields. They do not normally exceed 4 pages of Nature, and have no more than 30 references. They begin with a fully referenced paragraph, ideally of about 200 words, but certainly no more than 300 words, aimed at readers in other disciplines and continue up to 1,500 words.	The "Research Note" provides a forum for many types of concise research contribution. This category is typically half the length of a Research Article, e.g. important contributions of an empirical nature that relate to topics that appear frequently in the MIS Quarterly and other top journals, or discussions that relate to an important methodological issue (or issues) associated with a published article.

6.6 Modes of Writing

Spoken or written language is often categorized into prose or poetry. Prose is spoken or written language that lacks the more formal metrical structure of verse that can be found in traditional poetry. Prose comprises full grammatical sentences, which then constitute paragraphs and overlook aesthetic appeal, whereas poetry typically involves a metrical and/or rhyming scheme. Some works of prose contain traces of metrical structure or versification and a conscious blend of the two literature formats known as prose poetry. Verse is considered to be more systematic or formulaic, whereas prose is the most reflective of ordinary (often conversational) speech. On this point, Samuel Taylor Coleridge jokingly requested that novice poets should know the

"definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose,— words in their best order; poetry,— the best words in their best order."

Writing as forms of persuasion can also be categorized into types, modes or genres of writing. Types or modes of writing are broader categories that includes the types mentioned earlier such as narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic. Within each type or mode are genres that fit within the context of each type. Several genres of writing that are designed for research are described below.

6.6.1 Research Narratives

Narratives or story telling are among the most underrated genres in research. Narratives can be very powerful when applied in the opening of a research paper or when used as the binding principle for the whole research paper. Readers are transfixed when the research paper offers an interesting story. Research itself is being shaped by narratives. Narrative research methods are becoming popular among researchers (Elliot, 2007). Roland Barthes (1983) noted that narratives are seen, heard and read, they are told, performed, painted, sculpted and written; they are international, trans-historical and trans-cultural, "simply there, like life itself" (p. 215).

Research narrative writing tells a story by sharing the details of an experience containing elements of plot, setting, and characters. It answers the who, where, how and why questions about the topic of the research using colorful details that engage the reader. It may be presented from the beginning to end, but can also be craftily written using flashbacks and cyclical plotlines. It could contain dialogue that provide insights into the thoughts and actions of the characters. Within a character, the first person could be used to tell the story from the point of view of the main character, or the story could be told from an omniscient perspective, or third person, objective recounting of events. In the end, it provides a point or theme to the story. In the beginning narratives commonly identify and describe the setting, introduce the characters,

engage the reader with an enticing opening, and identify events leading towards a problem. In the middle, the problem is revealed and often challenges are presented (Mora-Flores, 2009).

6.6.2 Expository

Expository writing is a type of writing that is used to explain, describe, give information, or inform. The text is organized around one topic and developed according to a pattern or combination of patterns. This type of writing can include research papers, essays, newspaper and magazine articles, instruction manuals, textbooks, encyclopedia articles and other forms of writing, so long as they seek to explain. Expository writing is often distinguished from other forms of writing, such as fiction and poetry. It is also often distinguished from persuasive writing. Obviously, these two forms of writing are often combined in one paper or publication. Expository writing takes many forms, and some of these forms are described in the following sections. The text is organized around one topic and developed according to a pattern or combination of patterns. The writer of an expository text cannot assume that the reader or listener has prior knowledge or prior understanding of the topic that is being discussed. Since clarity requires strong organization, one of the most important mechanisms to improve skills in exposition is to improve the organization of the text.

6.6.3 Evaluative Writing

Evaluative writing requires a "research question." To evaluate you need to establish clear criteria of judgment and then explain how the subject meets that criteria. For example, to answer the question of "how nutritional foods might prevent disease" the writer produced answers based on nutritional value of the foods how that happens. The purpose of an evaluative essay is to demonstrate the overall quality (or lack thereof) of a particular product, business, place, service, or program. While any evaluation involves injecting some form of opinion, if an evaluation is done properly, it should not come across as opinionated. Instead, the evaluation

should seem reasoned and unbiased. The key to making this happen, and therefore the key to a good investigative essay, is establishing clear and fair criteria, judgments, and evidence.

6.6.3.1 Criteria

Criteria (the plural of criterion) means establishing what the ideal for the product/place/service/etc. should be. In other words, it means demonstrating what one should expect as the ideal outcome. Having clear criteria is what keeps an evaluation from feeling less like an opinion. For example, if I am evaluating a restaurant, I want to establish the criteria (quality of food, service, price, cleanliness, etc.) that any good restaurant will adhere to; these criteria can then be applied to the specific restaurant I am evaluating.

6.6.3.2 Judgment

The judgment is the establishment of whether or not the criterion is met. In other words, the judgment is what actually is. Using the example from above, if the first criterion for evaluating a restaurant is the quality of the food, the judgment states whether or not the particular restaurant offers food that meets or exceeds this stated quality.

6.6.3.3 Evidence

The evidence is the details offered to support the judgment. If my judgment is that a particular restaurant does not consistently offer quality food, I need to support this with a variety of evidence to show how the judgment was reached.

Generally, each body paragraph of an evaluation essay is going to focus on one specific criterion, which should be fully explained, followed by the judgment and a variety of evidence offered as support. Because of this, it is important that any evaluation contains several different criteria, judgments, and evidence.

An overall thesis should also be offered. For an evaluation essay, this thesis is the overall evaluation of whatever is being evaluated. Once again, if the criteria, judgments, and evidence are clear, the overall thesis should be as well. For example, if the restaurant meets most of the criteria laid out in the essay, the overall evaluation should be mostly positive, whereas if the most of the criteria isn't met, the evaluation will be mostly negative.

6.6.4 Interpretation

Interpretation answers the research question "What does it mean?" You may be asked to explain the symbolism in a piece of literature, examine a point of law, or make sense of test results. It answers questions like, "What does this data tell us? Can you explain the reading of the problem to others?" In its more technical form, interpretive writing involves hermeneutics, the philosophy and methodology of text interpretation. Interpretive writing can be categorized into two modes (Jewell, 2014): (1) The critical or interpretive analysis, and (2) the interpretation of literary works (hermeneutics).

The critical or interpretive analysis is the most common type of research paper in literature, the arts, and the other humanities. It involves breaking a subject (such as a segment of a work of art or, in other fields, a culture, person, or event) into its constituent parts, examining these components, and offering a meaning--or alternative meanings--about each. Usually such a paper starts with an interpretive question, such as "What is a major turning point in the work of literature " or "What is the relationship of Romeo to his father" and so on. To analyze means "to break into parts and examine the components." To interpret means "to offer possible meanings." The phrase "close reading" also is sometimes used to describe this kind of writing, as it requires close examination--detailed, careful reading sentence by sentence--of one or several small parts, sometimes as little as a line (in poetry), a paragraph (in short stories and essays, or a page or two (in books) to critically (thoughtfully and carefully) explain a work of literature.

The second type of interpretive essay is the interpretation of literary works, or the interpretive thesis because it is an argumentative literary paper. It is different from a simple literary analysis, or the critical analysis, which is an exposition or explanation of a literary working using the elements of literature. The simple literary analysis consists of elements of literature learned in high school such as plot, character, description, style, background, setting, metaphor, and others. A simple literary analysis does not argue but rather just points out the elements of literature in a literary work. The interpretive thesis starts by choosing an argument to make about how to interpret the literary work or some part of it. You are not trying to convince these other readers that your way is the only way or even the best way to view the literary work. All you have to do is convince your readers that your interpretation makes sense--that it is at least logical. What is an "interpretation"? It is your assumption, based on your experience, knowledge, and point of view, of some kind of meaning in the story that is more than just a simple theme obvious to most casual readers.

6.6.5 Definition

An essay on definitions often makes up a major section of other modes of writing or it could stand on its own (Hefferman, Lincoln, & Atwill, 2001). To reach your readers, they need to understand the written words and definitions enhance understanding and clarity of the writing. Whether or not a term is commonly used or applied in a specialized sense, the definition will help the reader follow the argument presented. You need to provide an extended definition to show that your subject fits into a selected and well-defined category. For example:

Slapping a child on the face is child abuse—You need to define child abuse and then show that an act of slapping fits the definition.

Title IX is a law, not an option, for athletic detail—You need to define the law in detail.

Plagiarism should be considered a criminal misdemeanor—You need to define a criminal misdemeanor and prove that plagiarism fits that definition.

So e.g. when you define "information technology" (IT) as computer-based artifacts that provide structure of meaning for humans—you need to define structure of meaning and then explain how this new definition creates a new domain for the associated field. A good definition includes three elements:

The subject (IT)

The class to which the subject belongs (computers)

The difference from others in this class (how it differs from other computers)

Definition is also necessary with technical and scientific terminology. You can define a disease, and then describe how best to treat the disease.

6.6.6 Argumentative

A research argument is an amiable conversation with your readers to solve a problem whose solution they are not yet convinced. In other words, they won't accept your arguments until they see good reasons based on reliable evidence and until you have responded to their questions and reservations (Turabian, 2010). It is not a "you against me" essay or intimidating your opponent into silence. It is not a clever rhetorical strategy to persuade readers regardless of the quality of the argument. A piece of writing cannot reproduce the face-to-face conversation where the two sides present their claims or evidence or raise objections resulting in a back-and-forth thoughtful exchange. Instead, the writer has to imagine the readers' questions and ask them on their behalf. In a good argumentative essay, readers recognize traces of this imagined conversation.

6.6.6.1 Proposal/Argumentative

This is an argumentative essay that says to the reader, "We should do something." It often has practical applications such as changing the university system from quarter to semester, canceling all drug testing of athletes because it presumes guilt. Proposals predict consequences. You must advance a thesis and support it with reasons and evidence. A proposal also requires you (1) to convince readers that a problem exists and is serious enough for action, (2) to explain the consequences to convince the reader that the proposal has validity, (3) to address any opposing opinions or positions, competing proposals, and alternative solutions.

In direct contrast to the analytical paper, your approach here is to take a stand on an issue and use evidence to back-up your stance, not to explore or flesh out an unresolved topic. This stance, this debatable statement or interpretation is known as your thesis. That point of view-- your thesis--and not some research question, is the core of this breed of paper. Argumentative or persuasive papers, as these names suggest, are also essay or attempts--after all, essay does come from the French word *essai*, or "attempt"--to convince the reader of a debatable or controversial point of view.

Convention has it that theses are generally found in the introductory paragraph(s), which makes sense considering your reader will get frustrated if your persuading point isn't stated early on. This is why guides to true analytical papers--even our short description above--avoid using the word "thesis" altogether and describe you as "drawing conclusions." They recognize that your critical evaluations, insights, and discoveries are going to be located toward the end of the paper and so are not theses in the true sense of the word.

Because your insights, which are what your readers are most interested in, are the very fulcrum on which an argumentative paper balances rather than just interspersed or tacked on the end of analytical papers, argumentative papers are probably the most popular type of research paper.

An argument is not just a belief or an opinion, like "I like the Beatles," because an opinion gives the reader no grounds to agree or disagree, and it doesn't urge the reader to commit or join in. An argument is an opinion with reasons to back it up and intentions to sell it to others, e.g. "I think the Beatles are vastly overrated, because …." An argument is also not a sermon because a sermon preaches to the choir and its readers don't need persuading; instead, it either converts an audience that is not convinced, or it rejuvenates the message that the audience has already accepted (Rawlins, 2002).

6.6.6.2   Causal Argument

Proposals predict consequences. Causal arguments show that a condition exists because of specific circumstances. That is, something has created this situation, and we need to know why.

6.7   How Researchers Think about Their Goals and Purpose of Research

All researchers gather facts and information, what we call data. But depending on their goals and aims, and their experience, they use data in different ways. Some researchers gather data on a topic—the invention of the Apple computer, for example—just to satisfy personal interest or meet the requirements of a research assignment. Experienced researchers, however, know they must do more than convince us that their answer is sound. They must also show us why their question was worth asking, how the answer helps us understand some bigger issue in a new way. If we can figure out how the Apple computer has changed the computing industry, we might then answer a larger question: how have innovations in computing transformed our lives in unexpected ways?

6.7.1 Asking Questions

Asking questions is probably the most important part of the research, even more than getting the results, because if the wrong questions are asked, the results may not address the target problem, resources may be wasted, and the whole research program heads in a less productive maybe even harmful direction. Evidence from linguistic and philosophical studies suggest that what is fundamental to disciplines is the set of questions they ask. Disciplines necessarily have disciplinary-specific questions. And these disciplinary-specific questions are what are being asked within inter-disciplinary practices as new fields of study fuse elements from the contribution of their "reference disciplines." Good research can be said to be about asking questions that are not being asked, or which other disciplines are incapable of asking. Science, if understood as a set of propositions, is essentially a set of principles and devices for establishing the answers to questions.

What defines a discipline is not necessarily its theory, its methods, its practitioners, or the particular canons that it holds—what defines a discipline is the particular set of questions that it asks. An example of this is the field of women's studies. It emerged as an academic field because there was a strong sense on the part of many people that there were many aspects of the human experience that were not being given sufficient attention. It did not mean that women were not being studied in the sciences. The object of women is studied in sociology, psychology, and even political science. And yet, women's studies still emerged. Why? Because there was a need to study the object of women not as a by-product of social forces as in sociology, or a kind of mental object as in psychology, or the center of feminist political activity, much less as a confounding or ignored variable in scientific studies, something which also happened. Women's studies are asking the questions that nobody else is asking. Intuitively, researchers often focus on providing and constructing *answers to questions*, but Alvesson and Sandberg (2013a) consider the construction of the *questions to be the more critical* aspect of

research because not only do questions make it possible to develop new knowledge, they encourage reflection and trigger intellectual activity; answers, on the other hand, tend to encourage closure and inactivity. In other words, problematizing the concerns of the research by asking questions that interrogate and challenge the assumptions underlying existing literature is more likely to produce interesting results (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013a; Slife and Williams, 1995).

6.7.1.1 Passing the "So What?" Test

Whenever you plan on writing a research paper, there is an extremely important point that you must constantly keep in the forefront of your mind--even English teachers frequently mention it as something students fail to do time and time again. What is it? To be sure to choose a topic worth arguing about or exploring. This means to construct a thesis statement or research question about a problem that is relevant, interesting, still debated, controversial, up in the air.

So arguing that drinking and driving is dangerous-- while you could find a ton of evidence to support your view --would be pretty worthless nowadays. Who would want to read something they already knew? You wouldn't be persuading them of anything and all your work would be pretty meaningless.

What this means is that during the topic-formulating stage and again now, always keep asking "SO WHAT?", "WHO CARES?" or to paraphrase the famous Canadian journalist Barbara Frum: "Tell me something new about something I care about." That will automatically make your paper significant and interesting both for you to write and the reader to study. Experienced researchers know that different readers expect them to ask and answer different kinds of questions:

6.7.1.2　Conceptual Questions: What should we think?

A question is conceptual when your answer to *So What?* doesn't tell readers what do to but helps them understand some issue. The conversation might go like this:

I'm working on the topic of risk evaluation.

Why?

Because I want to find out how ordinary people evaluate the risk that they will be hurt by terrorism.

So what if you do?

Once I do, we might better understand the bigger question of how emotional and rational factors interact to influence the way ordinary thinkers think about risk.

6.7.1.3　Practical Questions: What should we do?

The practical question is posed when your answer to the "So What?" question tells readers to do or change or fix some troublesome or at least improvable situation:

The conversation might go like this:

I'm working on the topic of communicating risk effectively.

Why?

Because I want to find out what psychological factors cause ordinary Americans to exaggerate their personal risk from a terrorist attack.

So what if you do?

Than I can tell the government how to counteract those factors when they communicate with the public about the real risk of terrorism.

Applied Questions: What must we understand before we know what to do?

Often we know we must do something to solve a practical problem, but before we can know what that is, we must do research to understand the problem better. We can call that kind of research *applied*. This type of research raises a question whose answer is not the solution to a practical problem but only a step toward it.

I want to find out how Americans have changed their daily lives in response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

So what if you do?

Then we can understand the psychological factors that cause ordinary Americans to exaggerate their personal risk form a terrorist attack.

So what if you do?

Then perhaps the government can use that information to communicate more effectively the real risk from terrorism.

Applied questions are common in business, engineering, and medicine and in companies and government agencies that do research to understand what must be known before they can solve a problem.

With most practical questions, we don't have to answer "So What?" because the benefit is usually obvious. Even most applied questions imply the practical benefits. Nevertheless, the answer to the "So What?" question needs to be made clear so the links between the research and the benefits can be ascertained. Sometimes the answer to the "So What?" question might not be obvious at the beginning of the research. At least a tentative answer needs to be formulated before the research can proceed because your readers may read your report and think, *I don't agree*. What researchers cannot accept is when the readers say *I don't care*.

6.7.2 Thinking Right

Each discipline has its own style of thought that must be mastered before a person feels at home in it and is able to write about it. What a novice writer needs to do more than anything else is to plug into the brain of an experienced writer in the discipline—to understand the assumptions the writer is making, the silent monologue that is occupying her head as she composes, the special effects she is trying to achieve. Without that guiding instinct, writing will remain all hit-or-miss—a frustrating repetition of trial and error, over and over again.

The second thing the novice writer needs to do is to rid of his or her egocentrism when writing— thinking only of him or herself. It is this way of thinking that creates bad writing. He thinks through an idea only until it is clear to him, since, for his purposes, it needn't be any clearer; he dispenses with transitions because it's enough that he knows how his ideas connect; he uses a private system—or no system; he doesn't trouble to define his terms because he understands perfectly well what he means by them; he writes page after page without bothering to vary his sentence structure; he paragraphs only when the mood strikes him; he ends abruptly when he decides he's had enough; he neglects to proofread the final job because the writing is over. Actually he's not writing at all; he's merely communicating privately with himself—that is, he's simply putting thoughts down on paper. This may be a perfectly good strategy when one is just thinking of ideas, but it is not writing. This is just "unconscious writing." Real writing begins when the writer is earnestly attempting to communicate with another. The success of the communication depends solely on how the reader receives it, and it is subject to the basic rules of good manners as any other human relationship. The conscious writer resembles a person who companionably faces her listener and tries her level best to communicate with him, even persuade and charm him in the process, and who eventually bids him the equivalent of a genial farewell. The novice writer needs to develop, first, an awareness of himself from the reader's

vantage point (objectivity); next, a capacity to put himself imaginatively in the mind of the reader (empathy); and finally, an appreciation of the reader's rights and feelings (courtesy).

Writing is the art of creating desired effects. You want your readers to view your ideas as sound and interesting, and to view you as smart, informed, direct, and companionable. If you don't persuade them to accept you, it's doubtful that you'll persuade them to buy the ideas you're proffering. We buy from people we like and trust. To win readers:

1. Have something to say that's worth their attention.

2. Be sold on its validity and importance yourself so you can pitch it with conviction.

3. Furnish strong arguments that are well supported with concrete proof.

4. Use confident language—vigorous verbs, strong nouns, and assertive phrasing.

This is not the complete recipe. The ultimate way we win readers is by courteously serving them—that is satisfying their needs. If we're going to ask them to give us their time and attention, then we're in their debt, not the other way around. Samuel Butler remarked, "We are not won by arguments that we can analyze, but by tone and temper, by the manner which is the man himself." This is especially critical in an academic writing, where egos and personalities tend to be inflated, and being opinionated comes is the norm. Writers who don't abide by this maxim will quickly find themselves out of favor—an author's nightmare. A pleasing manner of writing makes one's arguments themselves pleasing and opens the door for the reader's acceptance.

As a writer, you must cultivate and sensitize yourself to what wins *you* over—how and why *you* respond, and what makes *you* feel well served—and gradually learn to extend that awareness to your readers. As you read along, ask yourself such questions as: "Is his style too complex to be readable, or too plain, or is it just right—and why?" "What is his tone, and how does he achieve it? Do I like it or don't I?" "Why does he use a semicolon here instead of a period?" "Do

I like this two sentence paragraph?" There are five specific ways you can serve your readers' needs:

1. Phrase your thoughts clearly so you're easy to follow.

2. Speak to the point so you don't waste your readers' time.

3. Anticipate their reactions (boredom, confusion, fatigue, irritation).

4. Offer them variety and wit to lighten their work.

5. Talk to them in a warm, open manner instead of pontificating to them like a know-it-all.

6.8 Getting Ideas for Research

If the topic or the question wasn't assigned to you, or it hasn't popped up in your head when you are supposed to start writing, here are some things to think about to help you narrow down the topic or the question.

1. A skilled researcher is always puzzled by the most ordinary things. Some of the best research developed from asking very mundane questions. Why do children look like their parents? Why did the apple fall? By cultivating the ability to see what's odd in the commonplace, you'll never lack for research projects.

2. What topics are you interested in and already know something about? What can you learn more about that topic? An object? An idea? A process?

3. Can you find a discussion list or blog on the Internet about issues that interest you?

4. Have you taken any positions on any issues in your field in debates with others but found that you couldn't back up your views with good reasons and evidence?

5. What issues do people inside and outside your field misunderstand?

6. What topic is your instructor or supervisor working on? Would she like you to explore a part of it?

7. Explore problems relating to social welfare, business, economics, education, and government

8. Research past dissertations in your field of study. Explore the most cited articles in your field and look for puzzling phenomena that you find interesting.

9. Read blogs of authorities in your field or their published articles.

10. Research practitioner magazines and journals and explore topics that are hotly debated.

11. Does your field hold on to generally accepted but unproven suppositions?

12. Have you come across any unproven or weakly proven assertions by an authority in your field?

13. List important research results in your field and explore different approaches to testing those important results.

14. Find connections between two seemingly different ideas or phenomena. Explore those connections.

15. Don't begin with a topic. Instead, look at questions, problems, intentions, theses and feelings. Think all the time.

6.9   Finding Topics by Free Writing or Brainstorming

Free writing simply means getting ideas on paper as fast as you can. The trick is to let feelings and ideas pour forth. Jot down anything that occurs to you, without worrying about order or even making much sense. Keep going; to pause is to risk getting stuck, like a car in snow. Move the pencil, writing whatever pops into mind. Don't be afraid of making mistakes or of saying

something foolish. You probably will. So what? You're writing for yourself, and if you won't risk saying something foolish, you're not likely to say anything wise.

Here's how you might explore the different attitudes of the 1990s and the 1960s on sex, love, and marriage:

> ➤ Sex—less permissive today. Herpes? AIDS? More conservative morality? Just a generational reaction, a swing of the pendulum? Cooler about love and marriage. Less romantic. Harry and Ellen. Maybe feminism. If they have a chance at careers—prestige, money—women are harder-headed about marriage. Maybe more demanding about men, less willing to accept them on men's own terms. Maybe men leery of modem women. Economics? It's a tougher world. Fewer good jobs, more competition. Everything costs—education, cars, housing, kids. Materialism. Young people seem more materialistic. Concerned with money, worldly success. They want to make it. Be millionaires by thirty. Admiration for winners, fear being losers. Less idealistic? Do disillusion and cynicism push toward self-interest? But people in their twenties today aren't really cynical and disillusioned. Never been idealistic enough. They don't have to learn the lesson of *The Big Chili* They grew up in it.

Such jottings are not finely reasoned judgments. Many of the ideas are speculative and hastily generalized; some are probably biased. Still, topics have surfaced. The next task would be to look at them closely, rejecting some, choosing others; and then to gather information. Thus both methods of exploration have led to topics, the rudiments of an essay. But notice that while they cover the same general subject, they have led in rather different directions.

The analytical questions have stressed *what*—the nature of the changes in attitude; the free writing has stressed *why*—the reasons for the changes. These different emphases were not planned. They just happened. And that suggests an important fact: it is profitable to use both

methods to explore for topics. Questions have the advantage of focusing your attention. But a focused attention sees only what is under the lens, and that is a severe limitation. Brainstorming can be wasteful, leading in too many directions. But it is more likely to extend a subject in unforeseen ways and to make unexpected connections. The two methods, then, are complementary, not antithetical. Temperamentally, you may prefer one or the other. But it's wise to try both.

6.10 Making Your Topic Manageable

You must carve out of your topic a manageable piece. A small garden that is well tended is far more welcoming than a large garden that shows over-ambition. It's better to start small and grow big than to start big and maybe grow overwhelmed. You can limit your topic by asking yourself how you want to treat it. At this point, everything is speculative because you haven't done your reading yet, or you'll know only after you've started writing. The process itself is your teacher.

How can I tell what I think till I see what I say? – E. M. Forster

Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go. – E. L. Doctorow

There is always a point in the writing of a piece when I sit in a room literally papered with false starts and cannot put one word after another and imagine that I have suffered a small stroke, leaving me apparently undamaged but actually aphasic. – Joan Didion

I don't write easily or rapidly. My first draft usually has only a few elements worth keeping. I have to find out what those are and build from them and throw out what doesn't work, or what simply is not alive. … I am profoundly uncertain about how to write. I know what I love or what I like, because it's a direct, passionate response. But when I write I'm very uncertain whether it's good enough. That is, of course, the writer's agony. – Susan Sontag

Sometimes you get a line, a phrase, sometimes you're crying, or it's the curve of a chair that hurts you and you don't know why, or sometimes you just want to write a poem, and you know what's it's about. I will fool around on the typewriter. It might take me ten pages of nothing, of terrible writing, and then I'll get a line, and I'll think, "That's what I mean!" What you're doing is hunting what you mean, what you're trying to say. You don't know when you start. – Anne Sexton

I am an obsessive rewriter, doing one draft and then another, and another, usually five. In a way, I have nothing to say, but a great deal to add. – Gore Vidal.

Delay is natural to a writer. He is like a surfer—he bides his time, waits for the perfect wave on which to ride in. Delay is instinctive with him. He waits for the surge (of emotion? of strength? of courage?) that will carry him along. I have no warm-up exercises, other than to take an occasional drink. I am apt to let something simmer for a while in my mind before trying to put it into words. – E. B. White.

As you start searching for data and information, question your topic. Ask questions as you read, especially how and why. Try the following questions:

1. Ask how the topic fits into a larger context (historical, social, cultural, geographic, functionals, systemic, economic and so on)

2. Ask questions about the nature of the thing itself, as an independent entity. How has it changed through time? Why? What is its future? How many categories of your topic are there?

3. Turn positive questions into negative ones. Why is it not this or that?

4. Ask speculative questions. Why is such a thing common in certain circumstances and not others?

5. Ask what if questions: how would things be different if your topic did not exist, disappeared, or were put into a new context?

6. Ask questions that reflect disagreements with the source: if a source makes a claim that is weakly supported or even wrong, make that disagreement a question.

7. Ask questions analogous to those that others have asked about similar topics.

8. Look for questions that other researchers pose but don't answer. Many journal articles end with a paragraph ("Future Research Questions") or two about open questions, ideas for more research, and so on. You might not be able to do all the research suggested, but you can carve about a piece of it.

9. Find an internet discussion list on your topic and then "lurk" just reading the exchanges to understand the kinds of questions those on the list discuss.

6.11 Propose Some Working Answers

Before you get deep into your project or into data collection, try one more step. It is one that beginners resist but that experienced researchers usually attempt. Once you have a question, imagine some plausible answers, no matter how sketchy or speculative. At this stage, don't worry about whether they're right. That comes later. For example, suppose you ask, "Why do some religions use masks in ceremonies while others don't?" You might speculate:

Maybe cultures with many spirits need masks to distinguish them.

Maybe masks are common in cultures that mix religion and medicine.

Maybe religions originating in the Middle East were influenced by the Jewish prohibition against idolatry.

Try to imagine at least one plausible answer, no matter how tentative or speculative. If after lots of research you can't confirm it, you can organize your report around why that answer seemed

reasonable at the time but turned out to be wrong and so isn't worth the time of other researchers. That in itself is a valuable contribution to the conversation on your topic.

6.12 Making a Plan

You've chosen a subject (or had one chosen for you), explored it, thought about the topics you discovered, gathered information about them, even have some preliminary answers or solutions. Now what? Are you ready to begin writing? Well, yes. But first you need a plan. Perhaps nothing more than a loose sense of purpose, held in your mind and never written down—what jazz musicians call a head arrangement. Head arrangements can work very well— if you have the right kind of head and if you're thoroughly familiar with the subject. But sometimes all of us (and most times most of us) require a more tangible plan. One kind is a statement of purpose; another is a preliminary, scratch outline. Some writing guides oppose the use of the outline. We will explore the reasons for not using the outline as well.

6.12.1 The Statement of Purpose

Before starting to write, you need answers to questions like:

Why am I writing this?

What do I hope to accomplish?

What do I want?

What do I want the reader to do?

These purposes on the other hand, are *not* helpful:

To complete the assignment

To get a good grade

To write a good essay

To learn about the topic

To practice researching, thinking and writing

To increase the readers' knowledge

These purpose don't tell you what to do. The writer is always faced with decisions and the statement of purpose should help her with those decisions. How should I say that? Should I put this piece of information in or not? The better the purpose statement, the more it answers the writers' questions.

Your purpose statement should start with an infinitive verb. "My purpose is to ….". Your topic and purpose statement are never the same thing. The most common way to go wrong when stating purpose is to restate the topic.

> ➤ #My purpose is to convince the reader that the electoral college must be eliminated.
>
> ➤ My purpose is to evaluate the value of the electoral college so that the voting public will be better informed about their democratic rights.

It's nothing complicated—a paragraph or two broadly describing what you want to say, how you're going to organize it, what you want readers to understand, feel, believe. The paragraphs are written for yourself, to clarify your ideas and to give you a guide; you don't have to worry about anyone else's reading them.

Writing can have many different purposes. Here are just a few generic purpose categories described earlier:

- Summarizing: Presenting the main points or essence of another text in a condensed form

- Arguing/Persuading: Expressing a viewpoint on an issue or topic in an effort to convince others that your viewpoint is correct

- Narrating: Telling a story or giving an account of events

- Evaluating: Examining something in order to determine its value or worth based on a set of criteria.

- Analyzing: Breaking a topic down into its component parts in order to examine the relationships between the parts.

- Responding: Writing that is in a direct dialogue with another text.

- Examining/Investigating: Systematically questioning a topic to discover or uncover facts that are not widely known or accepted, in a way that strives to be as neutral and objective as possible.

- Observing: Helping the reader see and understand a person, place, object, image or event that you have directly watched or experienced through detailed sensory descriptions.

Even so, you may find on occasion that composing a statement of purpose is difficult, perhaps impossible. What that means is that you don't really know what your purpose is. Yet even failure is worthwhile if it makes you confront and answer the question: Just what am I aiming at in this paper?

Not facing that question before they begin to write is one of the chief causes people suffer from writing block. It's not so much that they *can't* think of what to say, as that they *haven't* thought *about* what they can say. Ideas do not come out of the blue; as we saw in the last Section, they have to be sought. And when they are found, they don't arrange themselves. A writer has to think about the why and how of using them.

Many of us think better if we write down our ideas. That's all a statement of purpose is really, thinking out loud, except with a pencil. The thinking, however, is not so much about the subject itself as about the problems of focusing and communicating it. Here's how a statement of purpose might look for a theme about attitudes toward sex, love, and marriage in the 1990s:

> ➢ My purpose is to identify and describe the differences concerning attitudes between two generations so that It seems to me that today people in their twenties feel differently about sex, love, and marriage than young people did in the 1960s. I'm not claiming the differences are universal, that every young adult today feels one way, while every young adult twenty years ago felt another. Just that the predominant tone has changed. I want to identify and describe these differences, focusing on the turn of the millennium, and to discuss why the changes came about. I see a problem of organization. Am I going to organize primarily around the differences themselves, first attitudes toward sex, then attitudes towards love and marriage? In this case, a discussion of causes would be subordinate. On the other hand, I could make the causes my main points of organization, beginning with a relatively detailed discussion of how attitudes today are different, but spending most of the paper in discussing how feminism, the hardening economy, and a tougher, more self-centered approach to life have combined to bring about the changes. I think I'll do it this second way. What I want readers to see is less of the facts about the new attitudes toward sex, love, and marriage, and more of the social and cultural causes generating the change.

6.13 Prewriting

Once you have your purpose statement just start writing! Don't feel constrained by format issues. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or writing in complete sentences. Brainstorm and

write down everything you can think of that might relate to the purpose statement and then reread and evaluate the ideas you generated. It's easier to cut out bad ideas than to only think of good ones. Once you have a handful of useful ways to approach the purpose statement you can use a basic outline structure to begin to think about organization. Remember to be flexible; this is just a way to get you writing. If better ideas occur to you as you're writing, don't be afraid to refine your original ideas.

6.13.1   The Scratch Outline

An outline is a way of dividing a subject into its major parts, of dividing these in turn into subparts, and so on, into finer and finer detail. There are formal outlines, which are usually turned in with a composition and even serve as compositions in their own right. And there are informal outlines, often called "working" or "scratch" outlines. The formal variety follows rules that prescribe the alternating use of numbers and letters and the way in which the analysis must proceed. But formal outlines and their rules will not concern us here.

Our interest is in the scratch outline, which serves only the writer's use and may be cast in any form that works. Begin by asking: What are the major sections of my composition? For example:

I.   Beginning

II.   How attitudes toward sex, love, and marriage in the 1990s differ from those in the 1960s

III.   Why the differences occurred

IV.   Closing

Now apply a similar question to each major section:

I.   Beginning

a. Identify subject and establish focus—on the reasons for the change rather than on the change itself

b. Quality and limit: attitudes in question are the predominating ones, those which set the tone of a generation

II. How attitudes toward sex, love, and marriage differ in the 2000s from those in the 1960s

a. Sex—less permissive, less promiscuous

b. Love—cooler, not so completely a preemptive good

c. Marriage—more calculating, rational; avoid early marriage, first get career on track

III. Why the differences occurred

a. Feminism—more job opportunities for women and greater independence; also stronger sense of their own worth—all this weakens the allure of love and marriage

b. Tighter economy—future has to be planned more carefully, less room for romantic illusions

c. More self-centered view of life—partly a result of the two conditions above, but becomes a cause in its own right

IV. Closing

a. The attitudes of the nineties more realistic, less prone to disillusion

b. But perhaps idealism has been sacrificed, or weakened, and the prevailing materialism is too ready to sell the world short

Thus the analysis could go on: the A's and B's broken down, examples introduced, comparisons offered, and so on. Generally, it is better to proceed with the analysis one step at a time, as in the example above. This keeps the whole subject better in mind and is more likely to preserve a reasonable balance. If you exhaustively analyze category I before moving on to II, then carry II down to fine detail before tackling III, you may lose sight of the overall structure of the composition.

How far you take a scratch outline depends on the length of your composition and obviously on your willingness to spend time in planning. But the more planning you do, the easier the actual writing will be. A good scratch outline suggests where possible paragraph breaks might come, and the ideas you have jotted down in the headings are the germs of topic statements and supporting sentences. But however you proceed and however far you carry the scratch outline, remember that as a plan it is only tentative, subject to change. And the odds are that you *will* change it. No matter how much you think about a subject or how thoroughly you plan, the actuality of writing opens up unforeseen possibilities and reveals the weakness of points that seemed important. A scratch outline is a guide, but a guide you should never hesitate to change.

6.13.2   Not Using an Outline: Brainstorming and Mapping

Some guides say that outlining is not a prewriting tool because it is rigid, mechanical, structured—the opposite to creative writing. It closes you down instead of opening you up. Instead jot down ideas, brainstorm, map or write an abstract.

6.13.2.1 Jot down Ideas or Write Reactively

You read something stimulating on your chosen issue and jot down all the stuff pouring from you in response. Write you reactions down as you read—don't think you'll read, then write down your thoughts, because by then they'll be gone. Don't write on the prompt, like in the margins;

write on a notepad. Don't tell yourself you'll transcribe the notes later—you won't. Don't take notes on what the text says; record the reactions you're having to it.

6.13.2.2 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is messy chatting with colleagues accompanied by note-taking. It differs from everyday conversation in four ways; (1) It is done as fast as possible. (2) It is unstructured—spit out single words and phrases as well as sentences or whole thoughts and take whatever comes, however fragmented. (3) You have not standards. (4) Record everything people say. Gather as many good and bad ideas, suggestions, examples, sentences, false starts, etc. as you can. Perhaps some friends can join in. Jot down everything that comes to mind, including material you are sure you will throw out. Be ready to keep adding to the list at odd moments as ideas continue to come to mind.

Talk to your audience, or pretend that you are being interviewed by someone — or by several people, if possible (to give yourself the opportunity of considering a subject from several different points of view). What questions would the other person ask? You might also try to teach the subject to a group or class.

See if you can find a fresh analogy that opens up a new set of ideas. Build your analogy by using the word like. For example, if you are writing about violence on television, is that violence like clowns fighting in a carnival act (that is, we know that no one is really getting hurt)?

Take a rest and let it all percolate.

Summarize your whole idea.

Tell it to someone in three or four sentences.

6.13.2.3 Listing

Some people find it difficult to allow their words just to flow out on the page. "Listing" is a different technique that can also lead to many ideas that could become good material for an essay.

Listing, as the name indicates, simply involves making a list. For his listing activity, John used his word processor to write down anything he could think of concerning Migrant Mother. He wrote down the information in the form of a list, without any logic to the order of items on the list.

Here is the list that John came up with:

- 1936--Dust Bowl

- Migrant farm workers

- poverty

- dirty clothing

- children hiding their faces

- children ashamed

- baby sleeping

- some clothes too big

- sleeve of mother's shirt torn

- mother's hand on cheek

- children with "bowl" haircuts

- family in a tent

- mother looking ahead

- mother's eyes squinted or focused

- mother's forehead wrinkled

- mother just breastfed baby

- baby has fat cheeks

- children leaning on mother

- mother had dirty, short fingernails

- family has not bathed in a while

- photo is in black and white

- mother is not looking at the photographer

- mother has her head up

There is no order to the items on John's list, but after he makes the list, he looks for items that might be related in some way.

By copying and pasting in his word processor, John brings together one group of items from his list that he feels are logically related:

- mother's hand on cheek

- mother looking ahead

- mother's eyes squinted or focused

- mother is not looking at the photographer

- mother had her head up

Together, all of these items give John the impression that the mother is not ready to give up and might be focused on thinking of a way out of her situation. This may be a good topic for a

paragraph in John's essay, as this prewriting activity has made clear that there are at least a few aspects of the photograph that point toward this idea. If John makes this idea one of the topics of his essay, he will return to the photograph and look for more aspects of it that might relate to the same idea.

John now looks over his list again to see if any of the other items logically go together, and he finds that some of them do. This prewriting activity has gone far in helping John develop ideas and in helping him see how some of the specifics of the subject might be logically related.

6.13.2.4 Mapping

The results from brainstorming are often diagrammed. You can map to find the central idea too, but it's usually used when you've found the topic or central idea. The central idea or seed is written in the center of a piece of paper and circled. You can start with a word as the seed, a suggestive phrase, a visual image, a picture. Now begin brainstorming or free associating connections between the seed and other thoughts. Let the other bits be whatever they are— words, sensations, questions. Write each bit down as it comes on the paper somewhere, circle or note it, and draw a line from it to the bit on the page it seems somehow connected to. Work out from the seed in all directions, letting bits cluster as they will.

If as you map, you catch glimpses of essay structure, record them somewhere. Cluster the bits that are related around the main arteries. You're generating: you can sort, label, sequence, and analyze later.

John decides to try some clustering to help him with his prewriting on Migrant Mother. John uses pen and paper for this prewriting activity. He begins by writing the words "Migrant Mother" in the middle of a page, and he then circles those words. From this circle in the center, John draws lines out to sets of other circles words, each representing a major idea coming from the center. Then, around these other sets of words, John draws still more lines, circles, and words

as he attempts to create a diagram of ideas about the painting. Below is an illustration of John's clustering activity.
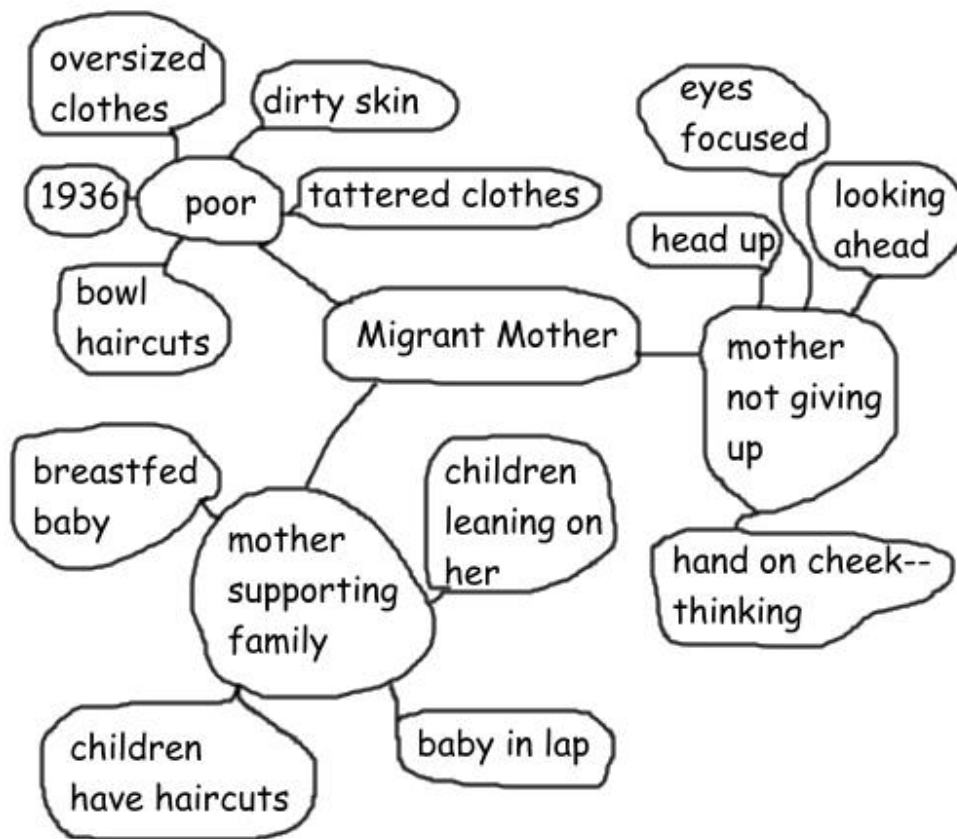
As with the other prewriting activities, John had generated some ideas here, but he has also given a sense of organization to those ideas. From the "Migrant Mother" bubble, we have three major ideas: the family being poor, the mother supporting the family, and the mother not giving up. Then, from each of the bubbles containing these ideas, we have aspects of the photograph that relate to it. For example, "baby in lap" and "breastfed baby" are connected to the "mother supporting family" bubble because they both relate to the idea that the mother is supporting her family.

An example of a map to analyze possible behavioral changes for combating climate change is shown below:
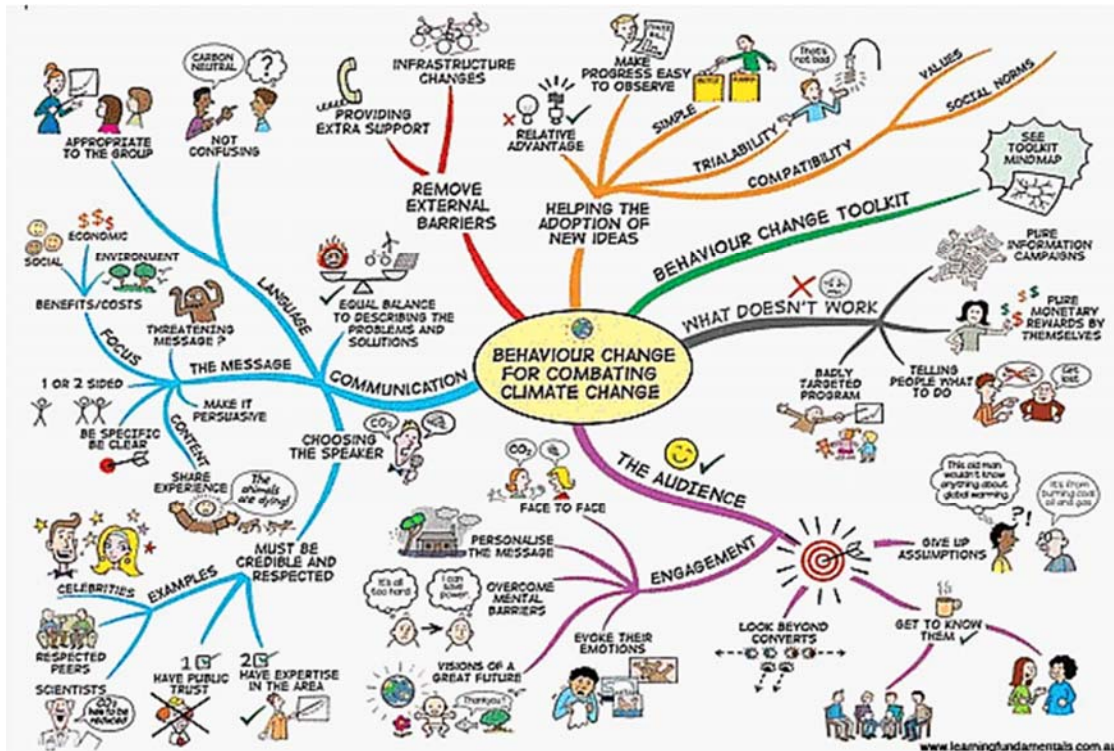
6.13.2.5 Stasis theory

Stasis theory is a four-question, pre-writing (invention) process developed in ancient Greece by Aristotle and Hermagoras. Later, the stases were refined by Roman rhetoricians, such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Hermogenes. Working through the four stasis questions encourages knowledge building that is important for research, writing, and for working in teams. Stasis theory helps writers conduct critical analyses of the issues they are investigating.

Specifically, stasis theory asks writers to investigate and try to determine:

- The facts (conjecture)

- The meaning or nature of the issue (definition)

- The seriousness of the issue (quality)

- The plan of action (policy).

The four basic stasis categories may be broken down into a number of questions and subcategories to help researchers, writers, and people working together in teams to build information and compose communication. The stases also help people to agree on conclusions, and they help identify where people do not agree. Here are the stases and some questions you can ask to help you conduct research, write, and work toward solving problems:

Fact

- Did something happen?

- What are the facts?

- Is there a problem/issue?

- How did it begin and what are its causes?

- What changed to create the problem/issue?

- Can it be changed?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Where did we obtain our data and are these sources reliable?

- How do we know they're reliable?

Definition

- What is the nature of the problem/issue?

- What exactly is the problem/issue?

- What kind of a problem/issue is it?

- To what larger class of things or events does it belong?

- What are its parts, and how are they related?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our definition of this problem/issue?

- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our definition?

Quality

- Is it a good thing or a bad thing?

- How serious is the problem/issue?

- Whom might it affect (stakeholders)?

- What happens if we don't do anything?

- What are the costs of solving the problem/issue?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our determination of the seriousness of this problem/issue?

- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our determination?

Policy

- Should action be taken?

- Who should be involved in helping to solve the problem/address the issue?

- What should be done about this problem?

- What needs to happen to solve this problem/address this issue?

It may also be useful to ask critical questions of your own research and conclusions:

- Who/what is influencing our determination of what to do about this problem/issue?

- How/why are these sources/beliefs influencing our determination?

Note: Related to stasis theory are the six journalistic questions (1) Who? (2) What? (3) Where? (4) When? (5) Why? (6) How? Lawyers also move through a similar knowledge building process known as IRAC: (1) Issue; (2) Rules; (3) Application; (4) Conclusion.

6.14 Thesis Statement

All the prewriting activities and exploratory work should lead to your thesis statement. The thesis statement is the statement that answers the questions posed by your research and expresses the main point of your writing by making a precise, specific assertion about the topic. A thesis statement expresses your unique insight or way of explaining a subject and often forecasts how you will develop and organize your text. A good thesis is above all *arguable*—that is, not everyone will agree with it.

A thesis statement is not the same as the statement of purpose. Often, the thesis statement extends the purpose statement into an assertion, claim or opinion that you will defend. While a purpose statement announces the goal, scope, and direction of the paper, a thesis statement makes a claim about that purpose.

Sometimes it is called the working hypothesis. Even the most tentative working hypothesis helps you to think ahead, especially about the kind of evidence that you'll need to support it. Will you need numbers? Field observations? Quotations? Images? Historical facts? More importantly, what kind of evidence would disprove your hypothesis. Answer those questions and you'll know what kind of data to look out for. Remember that your hypothesis is not your topic. It's your take on your topic subject. And it's what you'd have us think and feel about it too. In the real world, it's a letter to the editor.

Here's an example of where the purpose statement is combined with the thesis statement (in italics):

> ➤ The goal of this paper is to examine the effects of Chile's agrarian reform on the lives of rural peasants. The nature of the topic dictates the use of both a chronological and a comparative analysis of peasant lives at various points during the reform period. . . The Chilean reform example provides evidence that land distribution is an essential component of both the improvement of peasant conditions and the development of a democratic society. *More extensive and enduring reforms would likely have allowed Chile the opportunity to further expand these horizons.*

If you cannot imagine any working hypothesis, reconsider your question. Review your list of explorations questions to find one that you can answer. Sometimes the thesis is discovered in the writing process—not just neatly formulated before the writing begins. Under no circumstances should you put off thinking about a thesis statement. You might not settle on the best answer to your question until you've written your last page: writing, even revising, is itself an act of discovery. Just don't wait until that last page to start thinking about some answer.

Here are some rules to make sure the statement you're calling a thesis really is one:

1. A thesis is one complete sentence and only one. Not a noun phrase, however large, since nouns are useless. And not two sentences, because a thesis demands that you know what's at the center, and there can only be one center.

2. A thesis statement must be a declarative sentence – no questions, since theses are answers, and no imperatives.

3. A thesis should contain the word "because"—to force you to have at least one reason.

4. A thesis should contain the word "should"—to force you to think about what you're trying to do, not just say, with the essay.

5. A thesis must fit well into the following blank. "In this essay, I say '_____'". Thus a sentence "This essay explains how to change the oil in your car" isn't a thesis.

6. A thesis must summarize all of the essay—all parts of the essay must serve to support it.

7. The thesis is almost never present as a sentence in the essay.

When reviewing the working thesis, **ask yourself the following:**

- **Do I answer the question?** Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.

- **Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?** If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.

- **Is my thesis statement specific enough?** Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: *why* is something "good"; *what specifically* makes something "successful"?

- **Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test?** If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.

- **Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering?** If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's okay to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.

- **Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test?** If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See

what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

Consider the following thesis statement:

> ➤ #The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

This weak thesis restates the question without providing any additional information. You will expand on this new information in the body of the essay, but it is important that the reader know where you are heading. A reader of this weak thesis might think, "What reasons? How are they the same? How are they different?" Ask yourself these same questions and begin to compare Northern and Southern attitudes (perhaps you first think, "The South believed slavery was right, and the North thought slavery was wrong"). Now, push your comparison toward an interpretation—why did one side think slavery was right and the other side think it was wrong? You look again at the evidence, and you decide that you are going to argue that the North believed slavery was immoral while the South believed it upheld the Southern way of life. You write:

> ➤ While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

Now you have a working thesis! Included in this working thesis is a reason for the war and some idea of how the two sides disagreed over this reason. As you write the essay, you will probably begin to characterize these differences more precisely, and your working thesis may start to seem too vague. Maybe you decide that both sides fought for moral reasons, and that they just focused on different moral issues. You end up revising the working thesis into a final thesis that really captures the argument in your paper:

> ➤ While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.

Compare this to the original weak thesis. This final thesis presents a way of *interpreting* evidence that illuminates the significance of the question. *Keep in mind that this is one of many possible interpretations of the Civil War—it is not the one and only right answer to the question.* There isn't one right answer; there are only strong and weak thesis statements and strong and weak uses of evidence.

Here's another example of developing a thesis statement given the topic and the question:

Topic: Sugar consumption

Your readings about the topic, however, have led you to the conclusion that elementary school children are consuming far more sugar than is healthy and you decide to narrow the topic to sugar consumption of elementary school children.

From further study, you arrive at the question: "What should be done to reduce sugar consumption by children, and who should do it?" You then write a revised thesis statement:

More attention should be paid to the food and beverage choices available to elementary school children.

This statement asserts your position, but the terms *more attention* and *food and beverage choices* are vague.

You decide to explain what you mean about *food and beverage choices*, so you write:

Experts estimate that half of elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar.

This statement is specific, but it isn't a thesis. It merely reports a statistic instead of making an assertion.

You finally revise your thesis statement one more time to look like this:

Because half of all American elementary school children consume nine times the recommended daily allowance of sugar, schools should be required to replace the beverages in soda machines with healthy alternatives.

Notice how the thesis answers the question raised earlier.

Here are some examples of well-constructed thesis statements:

Sending foreign aid to African countries is doing more harm than good, and it should be discontinued; the practice has caused African countries to become vulnerable to inflation, currency fluctuations, corruption, and civil unrest.

China's one-child policy was intended to help control population growth. Instead, it has led to unintended and negative consequences, such as a diminishing labor force, an aging population, the neglect of basic human rights, and an unbalanced gender population.

6.15 Write a Rough Draft

Now that your mind is primed, you're ready to try a rough draft. The first draft, sometimes called the zero-draft, is a throwaway, a piece of free writing that allow you to warm up, get into the flow, work past your inhibitions, bust through your writer's block. It should take no more than 20 minutes. This rough draft responds to "Now let me hear what you have to say about your topic." Begin anywhere. Never let yourself pause for more than a second or two between sentences, and don't censor your thoughts. The key thing is to keep moving. After a bit of babble, you'll find yourself starting to make sense. You might want to verbalize your statements to help you along.

You may already have written an introduction that includes your working thesis. If not, as long as you have a draft thesis, you can begin developing the body and return later to the introduction. If your thesis suggests a plan or if you have sketched a preliminary outline, try to block out your paragraphs accordingly. Draft the body of your essay by writing at least a paragraph about each supporting point you listed in the planning stage. If you do not have a plan, pause for a few moments and sketch one.

Keep in mind that often you might not know what you want to say until you have written a draft. It is possible to begin without a plan — assuming you are prepared to treat your first attempt as a "discovery draft" that will be radically rewritten once you discover what you really want to say. Whether or not you have a plan when you begin drafting, you can often figure out a workable order for your ideas by stopping each time you start a new paragraph, to think about what your readers will need to know to follow your train of thought.

6.15.1   Critique Your Draft

Once you've finished, take a break—the longer the better—and then come back and read your draft critically. See whether you still like your thesis—or even believe it anymore. Consider how you might enrich it. Determine which ideas have promise and which look extraneous or fuzzy. Underline phrases that please you. Try to find places in your argument that need further support, then go back and ponder over your notes, maps or outline.

6.15.2   Freewrite Several Times

Begin writing again, this time for at least 45 minute. Take care that you don't start slowing up, for rapid writing encourages the mind to function freely. Many of your main ideas lurk in your unconscious. If you slow down to edit what you've written, you'll put an airtight lid on those thoughts and begin experiencing the agonizing "blocked" feeling we're all familiar with. Blockage

occurs when the creative process gets short-circuited by the picky critical process. Tinker to get the right words right. Usually a few drafts is necessary before the actual writing process starts.

6.16 Writing the Opener (Introduction)

The opener or the introduction is the first impression (other than the abstract) that the reader has with your writing. A reader will give the writing maybe three sentences (perhaps five sentences for a more elaborate academic paper) to prove itself, and that's all. Whatever impression the reader has will either be supported or contradicted by the remaining parts of the paper; nevertheless, that first impression will have a strong influence on how the paper is read. In that brief span, the mind of the reader is probably asking these questions:

"Does this paper attract me?"

"Enough to read on?"

"Is the writing easy, or will I have to work here?"

"Is the style fresh or just so-so?"

"Does the writer seem smart? Well-informed? Spirited? Or am I reading another amateur piece of writing"?

If writing appears to be work to the reader instead of being an enjoyable piece of writing, you've lost her. Instead of looking for the good, she'll look for the bad, if only to justify her initial impression. Besides, she knows from experience that the quality of the opener forecasts what follows. If from the outset the writer seems bored, unwilling to use his imagination, indifferent to his reader, and unclear in his thinking, the reader will think he's apt to remain that way and the writing is unlikely to be impressive. If the opener reveals passion, a clear perceptive mind, and a flair for drawing in the reader, the odds are the writer will stay true to form.

From the writer's point of view, the opener is also critical, for openers have a way of governing how the rest of the piece gets written. A good opener gives you momentum, confidence, and an extra incentive to make the remaining paragraphs worthy of the first. There's also a practical explanation. A good opener normally includes a good thesis—bold, fresh, clearly focused. And a good thesis tends to argue for itself because it has a built-in forward thrust. For this reason, many writers start by writing the opener or introduction first. Other writers delay writing the introduction until the paper is completed in order to refine the thesis statement or to include the paper's major elements. Others start by writing the introduction and then modify it after the paper is completed. All of these strategies have their strengths. Introductions should accomplish these tasks:

- Declare the topic

- Limit the subject

- Reveal the purpose that lead to the thesis statement – the plan

- Catch the reader's attention. It should say, "Read me, read me!"

- Establish an appropriate tone and point of view

Not all of these matters are equally important. Announcing and limiting the subject are essential. Laying out the plan of the paper and angling for the reader's interest, on the other hand, depend on your purpose and audience. Catching the reader's attention may not be as critical in academic writing since the reader is already committed to reading a difficult piece. However, making the introduction interesting lightens the work of the reader and sets the right tone. Tone and point of view are inevitable: whenever you write you imply them. In the beginning, then, you must establish a tone and point of view conducive to your purpose. The length of the beginning depends on the length and complexity of what it introduces. In a book the opening might take an entire Section with dozens of paragraphs. In a short article a single sentence might be

adequate. For most essays a single paragraph is enough. A full academic paper may need two or three paragraphs. Whatever their length, all effective openings fulfill the same functions.

6.16.1 *Declare the topic*

Avoid being vague or too broad. Doing so suggests that the writer hasn't thought it through, and is not valuing the reader's time. Consider these examples of weak openers:

1. Beginning with Overly Vague and General Statements or Broad Generalizations

➢ WEAK: Crimes are committed every day by different people, and there are many different kinds of crime. Some crimes are more serious than others. One serious crime today is identity theft. (Can you hear the readers already starting to snooze? The first two sentences to this introduction are far too vague and general to get anyone interested in what the writer is going to say in the paper.)

2. Beginning with Dictionary Definitions Obvious to Readers

➢ WEAK: According to <u>Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary</u>, the word "steal" is defined as "to take the property of another wrongfully." Identity theft is one form of stealing. (The writer of these sentences seems to assume that the readers are idiots, which is not a good impression to give readers. Who would not already know this definition of "steal"?)

3. Avoiding Beginning with a Direct Statement of What You, as the Writer, are Doing

➢ WEAK: In this essay, identity theft will be explained. I will discuss why it is such a big problem and what the government should do about it. (Such an introduction might be appropriate for a writer in junior high school, but mature writers use much more effective rhetorical strategies to begin their essays.)

Compare the weak examples above with the following two stronger openers. The first applies an interesting and surprising fact about the topic while the second introduces the topic using interesting background and historical information

> ➤ Identity fraud is the fastest growing crime in the United States. In 2004, over nine million Americans, or approximately one person in 24, became victims of identity fraud or identity theft, at a cost to the economy of 52.6 billion dollars ("2005 Identity Fraud Survey Report").

> ➤ Identity theft is not a new crime. Throughout history, unscrupulous individuals have pretended to be people they are not, often with the goal of political, social, or financial gain. With the right appearance and demeanor, people have falsely presented themselves as kings and bishops. Today, in our information age, identity theft is a far more prevalent problem. With access to names, Social Security numbers, and other personal information, thieves are able to steal identities, leaving the victims struggling to clear their good names.

6.16.1.1 Explicit and Implicit Announcement

In explicit announcement you literally state in some fashion or other, "This is my subject." The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead begins *Religion in the Making* like this:

> ➤ It is my purpose to consider the type of justification which is available for belief in the doctrines of religion.

The words "It is my purpose" make this an explicit announcement.

It would have been implicit had Whitehead begun:

> ➤ Belief in the doctrines of religion may be justified in various ways.

This sentence does not literally tell readers what the subject is, but the subject is clearly implied. Because of its clarity, scholars and scientists writing for their colleagues often use explicit announcement. On less formal occasions it may seem heavy-handed (controlling, forcing more than necessary). A school theme, for instance, ought not to begin "The purpose of this paper is to contrast college and high school." It is smoother to establish the subject by implication: "College and high school differ in several ways." Readers don't have to be hit over the head. Implicit announcements may appear as rhetorical questions, as in this essay about historians:

> ➢ What is the historian?
>
> ➢ The historian is he who tells a true story in writing.
>
> ➢ Consider the members of that definition. --Hilaire Belloc

Similarly the theme on college and high school might have opened:

> ➢ In what ways do college and high school differ?

Opening questions, however, can sound mechanical. While better than no announcement at all, or the clumsiness of "The purpose of this paper is," rhetorical questions are not very original. Use them for announcement only when you can do so with originality or when all other alternatives are less attractive.

The same advice holds for opening with a dictionary definition, another way of announcing subjects implicitly. Nothing is inherently wrong in starting off with a quote from a reputable dictionary, but it is trite. Of course a clever or an unusual definition may make a good opening. John Dos Passos's definition of college as "four years under the ethercone" is certainly novel and provocative and might make a fine beginning.

When the purpose of an essay is to define a word or idea, it is legitimate to start from the dictionary. But these exceptions admitted, the dictionary quotation, like the rhetorical question, has been overworked as a way of implying the subject.

Declare the topic as you're doing more interesting things. Some guides say that doing it quickly and directly, what they call the front-door approach or the explicit approach. These writers march into their topic with breathtaking assurance, clearly eager to share their opinions. By doing so, they demonstrate that they know what they think and why they think it. The opposite back-door approach or implicit approach can be formulaic.

6.16.1.2 Immediate and Delayed Announcement

Your second choice involves whether to announce the subject immediately or to delay. This opening line of an essay called "Selected Snobberies" by the English novelist Aldous Huxley falls into the first category:

> ➢ All men are snobs about something.

Letting readers in on the subject at once is a no-nonsense, businesslike procedure. But an immediate announcement may not hold much allure. If the subject is of great interest, or if the statement is startling or provocative (like Huxley's), it will catch a reader's eye. Generally, however, immediate announcement is longer on clarity than on interest. So you may prefer to delay identifying the subject. Delay is usually achieved by beginning broadly and narrowing until you get down to the subject. The critic Susan Sontag, for instance, uses this beginning for an essay defining "Camp" (a deliberately pretentious style in popular art and entertainment):

> ➢ Many things in the world have not been named; and many things, even if they have been named, have never been described. One of these is the sensibility—unmistakably modern, a variant of sophistication but hardly identical with it—that goes by the name of "Camp."

Less commonly the subject may be delayed by focusing outward, opening with a specific detail

or example and broadening to arrive at the subject. Aldous Huxley opens an essay

on "Tragedy and the Whole Truth" in this manner:

> ➤ There were six of them, the best and the bravest of the hero's companions. Turning back
>
> from his post in the bows, Odysseus was in time to see them lifted, struggling, into the
>
> air, to hear their screams, the desperate repetition of his own name. The survivors could
>
> only look on, helplessly, while Scylla "at the mouth of her cave devoured them, still
>
> screaming, still stretching out their hands to me in the frightful struggle." And Odysseus
>
> adds that it was the most dreadful and lamentable sight he ever saw in all his "explorings
>
> of the passes of the sea." We can believe it; Homer's brief description (the too-poetical
>
> simile is a later interpolation) convinces us.
>
> Later, the danger passed, Odysseus and his men went ashore for the night, and, on the
>
> Sicilian beach, prepared their supper—prepared it, says Homer, "expertly." The Twelfth
>
> Book of the Odyssey concludes with these words: "When they had satisfied their thirst
>
> and hunger, they thought of their dear companions and wept, and in the midst of their
>
> tears sleep came gently upon them."
>
> The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—how rarely the older literatures ever
>
> told it! Bits of the truth, yes; every good book gives us bits of the truth, would not be a
>
> good book if it did not. But the whole truth, no. Of the great writers of the past incredibly
>
> few have given us that. Homer—the Homer of the Odyssey— is one of those few.

It is not until the third paragraph that Huxley closes in on his subject, of which the episode from

the *Odyssey* is an example. Delayed announcement has several advantages. It piques readers'

curiosity. They know from the title that the opening sentences do not reveal the subject, and

they are drawn in to see where they are headed. Curiosity has a limit, however; you can tease readers too long.

A broad beginning can also clarify a subject, perhaps supplying background or offering examples. Finally, delayed announcement can be entertaining in its own right. There is a pleasure like that of watching a high-wire performer in observing an accomplished writer close in on a subject.

More immediate announcement, on the other hand, is called for in situations where getting to the point is more important than angling for readers or entertaining them. How you announce your subject, then, as with so much in writing, depends on purpose—that is, on your reason for addressing your readers.

6.16.2   Limiting the Subject

In most cases a limiting sentence or clause must follow the announcement of the subject. Few essays (or books, for that matter) discuss *all* there is to say; they treat some aspects of a subject but not others. As with announcement, limitation may be explicit or implicit. The first—in which the writer says, in effect, "I shall say such and so"—is more common in formal, scholarly writing. The grammarian Karl W. Dykema begins an article entitled "Where Our Grammar Came From":

> ➤ The title of this paper is too brief to be quite accurate. Perhaps with the following subtitle it does not promise too much: A partial account of the origin and development of the attitudes which commonly pass for grammatical in Western culture and particularly in English-speaking societies.

On informal occasions one should limit the subject less literally, implying the boundaries of the paper rather than literally stating them:

> Publishers, I am told, are worried about their business, and I, as a writer, am therefore worried too. But I am not sure that the actual state of their affairs disturbs me quite so much as some of the analyses of it and some of the proposals for remedying what is admittedly an unsatisfactory situation. --Joseph Wood Krutch

Without literally saying so, Krutch makes it clear that he will confine his interest in the problems publishers face to criticizing some of the attempts that have been made to explain and solve those problems.

Besides being explicit or implicit, limitation may also be positive or negative (or both). The paragraphs by Dykema and Krutch tell us what the writers *will* do; they limit the subject in a positive sense. In the following case the English writer and statesman John Buchan tells what he will *not* do (the paragraph opens the Section "My America" of his book *Pilgrim's Way):*

> The title of this Section exactly defines its contents. It presents the American scene as it appears to one observer—a point of view which does not claim to be that mysterious thing, objective truth. There will be no attempt to portray the "typical" American, for I have never known one. I have met a multitude of individuals, but I should not dare to take any one of them as representing his country— as being that other mysterious thing, the average man. You can point to certain qualities which are more widely distributed in America than elsewhere, but you will scarcely find human beings who possess all these qualities. One good American will have most of them; another, equally good and not less representative, may have few or none. So I shall eschew generalities. If you cannot indict a nation, no more can you label it like a museum piece.

Some limitation—explicit or implicit, positive or negative— is necessary at the beginning of most essays. Term papers, long formal essays whose purpose is to inform, technical and scholarly

articles, all may have to engage in extensive boundary fixing to avoid misleading or disappointing the reader. Shorter themes, however, do not require much limitation. Readers learn all they really need to know by an opening sentence like this:

> ➢ College is different from high school in several ways—especially in teaching, homework, and tests.

The final phrase conveys the limitations, following the announcement in the first clause of the sentence. The subject is a contrast between college and high school, the focus is on college, and the contents are limited to three specific points of difference. That is limitation enough for a brief, informal essay, and the writer can get on with the discussion without a heavy statement like this:

> ➢ I shall limit the contrast to teaching methods, homework, and tests.

There is no rule to test whether you have limited a subject sufficiently. Just put yourself in the reader's place and ask if it is clear (whether by direct statement or by implication) what the essay will do and what it will not do.

6.16.3   Reveal the Purpose and Lead to the Thesis Statement-the Plan

Begin with some basic questions: Why are you writing to me? How can I use this? Why does this matter? The introduction should address the "So What?" question head on. This function of the beginning, though not an invariable one, is to clarify how the essay will be organized. The writer has the plan in mind when composing the beginning paragraph (or revising it). The question is: Should the plan be revealed to the reader?

Writers often do consider it necessary. Harold Mattingly begins his book *Roman Imperial Civilization* with this paragraph:

> The object of this first Section is to give a sketch of the Empire which may supply a background to all that follows: to explain what the position of Emperor from time to time was, how it was defined in law, how it was interpreted by the subjects; then, around the Emperor, to show the different parts of the State in relation to one another and to him. Later Sections will develop particular themes. We shall have to consider at the close how far the constitution of the Empire was satisfactory for its main purposes, how much truth there is in the contention that imperfections in the constitution were a main cause of Decline and Fall.

The paragraph indicates not only the plan of the first Section and that of the whole book, but also how the opening Section fits into the larger organization. Even with subjects less complex and grand than the Roman Empire, writers may wish to tell us how they intend to develop their essays:

> I want to tell you about a woodsman, what he was like, what his work was, and what it meant. His name was Alfred D. Teare and he came originally from Nova Scotia, but all the time I knew him his home was in Berlin, New Hampshire. Probably the best surveyor of old lines in New England, he was—in his way—a genius. --Kenneth Andler

This straightforward paragraph not only announces and limits the subject but also reveals something about the organization of the essay. Readers are prepared for a three-part structure: Teare as a person, the nature of his work, and the significance of that work. Assuming that the writer knows his craft—as in this case he does—we know the order in which he mentions these aspects of his subject reflects the order in which he will treat them. The plan has been clarified implicitly and effectively.

Establishing your plan in the beginning has several virtues. It eases the reader's task. Knowing where they are headed, readers can follow the flow of ideas. An initial indication of the

organization also simplifies later problems of transition. When a writer can assume that readers understand the general scheme of the essay, it is easier to move them from point to point.

As with limiting the subject, one cannot set down clear-cut rules about when to reveal the plan. Generally, it is wise to indicate something about the organization of compositions that are relatively long and that fall into several well-defined parts. Shorter, simpler essays less often require that their plan be established in the opening paragraph.

When you must indicate your plan, do so as subtly as you can. The imaginary theme about high school and college that begins:

> ➢ College is different from high school in several ways—especially in teaching methods, homework, and tests.

clearly implies the three parts of the essay and their order. In longer work you may occasionally feel it desirable to indicate organization explicitly. But be sure that your subject is substantial enough and your purpose serious enough to support such a beginning.

Keep in mind that not all papers require thesis statements. Narrative or descriptive writing may just be made up of exactly that—descriptions. There might be any powerful thesis necessary. However, having an opinion or a stand regarding the description may help the writer pull together elements of description or narration in a more effective manner. For some types of writing, it may be difficult or impossible to express the central idea in a thesis statement; or it may be unwise or unnecessary to include a thesis statement in the essay. A personal narrative, for example, may have a focus that is too subtle to be distilled in a single statement. Strictly informative writing, like that found in many business memos, may be difficult to summarize in a thesis. In such instances, do not try to force the central idea into a thesis sentence. Instead, think in terms of an overriding purpose, which may or may not be stated directly.

Your assignment may suggest several ways of looking at a topic, or it may name a fairly general concept that you will explore or analyze in your paper. You'll want to read your assignment carefully, looking for key terms that you can use to focus your topic.

- **Sample assignment**: Analyze Spain's neutrality in World War II

- **Key terms:** analyze, Spain's neutrality, World War II

After you've identified the key words in your topic, the next step is to read about them in several sources, or generate as much information as possible through an analysis of your topic. Obviously, the more material or knowledge you have, the more possibilities will be available for a strong argument. For the sample assignment above, you'll want to look at books and articles on **World War II** in general, and **Spain's neutrality** in particular.

As you consider your options, you must decide to focus on one aspect of your topic. This means that you cannot include everything you've learned about your topic, nor should you go off in several directions. If you end up covering too many different aspects of a topic, your paper will sprawl and be unconvincing in its argument, and it most likely will **not fulfill the assignment requirements**.

For the sample assignment above, both **Spain's neutrality** and **World War II** are topics far too broad to explore in a paper. You may instead decide to focus on **Franco's role in the diplomatic relationships between the Allies and the Axis**, which narrows down what aspects of Spain's neutrality and World War II you want to discuss, as well as establishes a specific link between those two aspects. At this point, you can craft a thesis statement concerning Franco's role in the diplomatic relationship.

Once you have a topic, you will have to decide what the main point of your paper will be. This point, the "controlling idea," becomes the core of your argument (thesis statement). This main idea also contributes to a purpose statement.

Example 1

Topic

Franco's role in the diplomatic relationships between the Allies and the Axis

Evidence

- Franco first tried to negotiate with the Axis

- Franco turned to the Allies when he couldn't get some concessions that he wanted from the Axis

Possible conclusion:

➢ Spain's neutrality in WWII occurred for an entirely personal reason: Franco's desire to preserve his own (and Spain's) power.

Purpose statement

This paper will analyze Franco's diplomacy during World War II to see how it contributed to Spain's neutrality.

Example 2

Topic

The relationship between the portrayal of warfare and the epic simile about Simoisius at 4.547-64.

Evidence

- The simile compares Simoisius to a tree, which is a peaceful, natural image.

- The tree in the simile is chopped down to make wheels for a chariot, which is an object used in warfare.

Possible conclusion:

At first, the simile seems to take the reader away from the world of warfare, but we end up back in that world by the end.

Purpose statement

This paper will analyze the way the simile about Simoisius at 4.547-64 moves in and out of the world of warfare.

Beginning statements obtained through the methods illustrated above can serve as a framework for planning or drafting your paper, but remember they're not yet the specific, argumentative thesis you want for the final version of your paper. In fact, in its first stages, a thesis statement usually is ill-formed or rough and serves only as a planning tool.

As you write, you may discover evidence that does not fit your temporary or "working" thesis. Or you may reach deeper insights about your topic as you do more research, and you will find that your thesis statement has to be more complicated to match the evidence that you want to use.

6.16.4   Saying "Read Me, read me!"

An opener is like a free sample or a movie trailer. Once you've tasted it or seen it, you want more. Obviously you can't write to everyone. This is why awareness of your audience is so important. The tone and voice of the opener should suit the audience. Although academic writing may not necessarily scream "Read Me!" that does not mean the introduction should be bland and uninteresting.

6.16.4.1 Interesting the Reader

Sometimes you can take readers' interest for granted. Scholars and scientists writing for learned journals, for instance, do not have to make much effort to catch their readers' attention. More commonly a writer's audience includes at least some people whose interest must be deliberately sought. Several strategies for doing this are available.

1. Stressing the Importance of the Subject

Treat the reader as a reasonable, intelligent person with a desire to be well informed and say, in effect: "Here is something you should know or think about." The American poet and critic John Peale Bishop begins an essay on Picasso with this sentence:

> ➢ There is no painter who has so spontaneously and so profoundly reflected his age as Pablo Picasso.

2. Arousing Curiosity

This is usually a more effective strategy than stressing the importance of the subject. You may play upon curiosity by opening with a short factual statement that raises more questions than it answers. Astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington begins a Section in his book *The Philosophy of Science* with this statement:

> ➢ I believe there are 15,747,724,136,275,002,577,605,653,691, 181,555,468,044,717,914,527,116,709,366,231,425,076,185,631, 031,296 protons in the universe and the same number of electrons.

It would be a curiously incurious reader who would not boggle at this and read on to learn how the writer arrived at so precise a figure. A short step from such interest-arousing factual openings is the cryptic beginning, that is, a mysterious or not quite clear statement. Charles Lamb opens an essay with:

> ➢ I have no ear.

We soon learn that he means "no ear for music," but for a moment we are startled. To be effective a cryptic opening must not simply be murky. It must combine clarity of statement with mystery of intent. We know *what* it says, but we are puzzled about *why.* The mystery has to be

cleared up rather quickly if the reader's interest is to be retained. For most of us curiosity does not linger; without satisfaction it goes elsewhere.

Carrying mystification a little further, you may open with a rhetorical paradox—a statement that appears to contradict reality as we know it. Hilaire Belloc begins his essay "The Barbarians" this way:

> ➢ It is a pity true history is not taught in the schools.

Readers who suppose true history is taught may be annoyed, but they are likely to go on. Sometimes mystification takes the form of a *non sequitur,* that is, an apparently non-logical sequence of ideas. An enterprising student began a theme:

> ➢ I hate botany, which is why I went to New York.

The essay revealed a legitimate connection, but the seeming illogic fulfilled its purpose of drawing in the reader.

3. Amusing the Reader

Aside from arousing their curiosity, you may attract readers by amusing them. One strategy is to open with a witty remark, often involving an allusion to a historical or literary figure. Francis Bacon opens his essay "Of Truth" with this famous sentence:

What is truth? said jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer. A contemporary writer alludes both to Pontius Pilate and to Bacon by adapting that beginning for the essay "What, Then, Is Culture?":

> ➢ *"What is truth?"* said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.
>
> *"What is culture?"* said an enlightened man to me not long since, and though he stayed
>
> for an answer, he did not get one. --Katherine Fullerton-Gerould

Another variety of the entertaining opening is the anecdote. Anecdotes have a double value, attracting us once by their intrinsic wittiness and then by the skill with which writers apply them to the subject. In the following opening Nancy Mitford describes the history of the French *salon,* a social gathering of well-known people who discuss politics, art, and so on:

> ➢ "What became of that man I used to see sitting at the end of your table?" someone asked the famous eighteenth-century Paris hostess, Mme. Geoffrin.
>
> "He was my husband. He is dead." It is the epitaph of all such husbands. The hostess of a salon (the useful word salonniere, unfortunately, is an Anglo-Saxon invention) must not be encumbered by family life, and her husband, if he exists, must know his place. The salon was invented by the Marquise de Rambouillet at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Mitford's story is amusing, in a cynical fashion. More important, it leads naturally into her subject. *Naturally*—that is important, for an opening anecdote fails if forced upon the subject from the outside. Still another entertaining opening strategy is the clever and apt comparison. It may be an analogy, as in the following passage by Virginia Woolf, the first part of the opening paragraph of her essay "Reviewing":

> ➢ In London there are certain shop windows that always attract a crowd. The attraction is not in the finished article but in the worn-out garments that are having patches inserted in them. The crowd is watching the women at work. There they sit in the shop window putting invisible stitches into moth-eaten trousers. And this familiar sight may serve as an illustration to the following paper. So our poets, playwrights, and novelists sit in the shop window, doing their work under the eyes of reviewers.

Notice, incidentally, the skill with which Woolf focuses down upon the subject. A comparison calculated to arouse interest may be a simile or metaphor. G. K. Chesterton wittily begins an essay "On Monsters" with this metaphorical comparison:

> ➤ I saw in an illustrated paper—which sparkles with scientific news— that a green-blooded fish had been found in the sea; indeed a creature that was completely green, down to this uncanny ichor in its veins, and very big and venomous at that. Somehow I could not get it out of my head, because the caption suggested a perfect refrain for a Ballade: A green-blooded fish has been found in the sea. It has so wide a critical and philosophical application. I have known so many green-blooded fish on the land, walking about the streets and sitting in the clubs, and especially the committees. So many green-blooded fish have written books and criticism of books, have taught in academies of learning and founded schools of philosophy that they have almost made themselves the typical biological product of the present age of evolution.

Chesterton uses "green-blooded fish" as a metaphor for all self-centered, dehumanized people, and the metaphor attracts us by its originality.

Generally, avoid being too obvious. Also avoid bald statements such as "In this paper I will discuss the causes of failing oil prices." Don't apologize. Avoid self-critical statements such as "I do not have much background in this subject" or "I am not sure if I am right, but here is my opinion." Don't use overworn expressions. Avoid empty statements such as "Love is what makes the world go round" or "Haste makes waste." Here are some quick tips and examples of how to make the opening interesting:

1. Describe a scene or tell an anecdote

> Welcome to French class, where you must learn to juggle irregular verbs, flying chalk, and the constant threat of bodily harm. At the age of forty-one, I am returning to school and having to think of myself as what my French textbook calls "a true debutant." After paying my tuition, I was issued a student ID, which allows me a discounted entry fee at movie theaters, puppet shows, and Festyland, a far-flung amusement part that advertises with billboards picturing a cartoon stegosaurus sitting in a canoe and eating what appears to be a ham sandwich. --David Sedaris, "Me Talk Pretty One Day"

2. Provide relevant background information

> To hold its own in the struggle for existence, every species of animal must have a regular source of food, and if it happens to live on other animals, its survival may be very delicately balanced. The hunter cannot exist without the hunted; if the latter should perish from the earth, the former would too. When the hunted also prey on some of the hunters, the matter may become more complicated. --Alexander Petrunkevitch, "The Spider and the Wasp"

3. Address your readers directly

> You ask me what is poverty? Listen to me. Here I am, dirty, smelly, and with no "proper" underwear on and with the stench of my rotting teeth near you. I will tell you. Listen to me. Listen without pity. I cannot use your pity. Listen with understanding. Put yourself in my dirty, worn out, ill-fitting shoes, and hear me. --Jo Goodwin Parker, "What is Poverty?"

4. Use a comparison, a contrast, or an analogy

> I've finally figured out the difference between neat people and sloppy people. The distinction is, as always, moral. Neat people are lazier and meaner than sloppy people. --Suzanne Britt, "Neat People vs. Sloppy People"

5. Use a startling remark or statistic

> Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbirth are transforming the lives of American children. In the postwar generation more than 80 percent of children grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other. By 1980 only 50 percent could expect to spend their entire childhood in an intact family. If current trends continue, less than half of all children born today will live continuously with their ow mother and father throughout childhood. Most American children will spend several years in a single-mother family. --Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right"

6. Ask a question or present a problem

> In grave discussions of "the renaissance of the irrational" in our time, superstition does not figure largely as a serious challenge to reason or science. Parapsychology, UFOs, miracle cures, transcendental meditation and all the paths to instant enlightenment are condemned, but superstition is merely deplored. Is it because it has an unacknowledged hold on so many of us? --Robertson Davies, "A Few Kind Words for Superstition"

7. Use a quotation

> "A name is a prison, God is free," once observed the Greek poet Nikos Kazantzakis. He meant, I think, that valuable though language is to man, it is by very necessity limiting, and creates for man an invisible prison. Language implies boundaries. A word spoken creates a dog, a rabbit, a man. It fixes their nature before our eyes; henceforth their

shapes are, in a sense, our own creation. They are no longer part of the unnamed shifting architecture of the universe. They have been transfixed as if by sorcery, frozen into a concept, a word. Powerful though the spell of human language has proven itself to be, it has laid boundaries upon the cosmos. --Loren Eiseley, "The Cosmic Prison"

8. Define an important term or concept

➤ Long before I began Dumpster diving I was impressed with Dumpsters, enough so that I wrote the Merriam-Webster research service to discover what I could about the word Dumpster. I learned from them that it is a proprietary word belonging to the Dempster Dumpster company. Since then I have dutifully capitalized the word, although it was lowercased in almost all the citations Merriam-Webster photocopied for me. Dempster's word is too apt. I have never heard these things called anything but Dumpsters. I do not know anyone who knows the generic name for these objects. From time to time I have heard a wino or hobo give some corrupted credit to the original and call them Dipsy Dumpsters. I began Dumpster diving about a year before I became homeless. --On Dumpster Diving, "Lars Eighner"

9. Open with a paradox

➤ Human beings are the only animals that experience the same sex drive at times when we can—and cannot—conceive. Just as we developed uniquely human capacities for language, planning, memory, and invention along our evolutionary path, we also developed sexuality as a form of expression, a way of communicating that is separable from our need for sex as a way of perpetuating ourselves. For humans alone, sexuality can be and often is primarily a way of bonding, of giving and receiving pleasure, bridging

> differentness, discovering sameness, and communicating emotion. --Gloria Steinem,
>
> "Erotica and Pornography"

10. Challenge a widely held assumption or opinion

> ➤ Remember that hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica, the one thought to be caused by
>
> chlorofluorocarbons? It may be on the mend, say Japanese researchers. They say the hole
>
> could be on its way to recovery more quickly than anticipated. --Jeffrey Winters, "That
>
> Ozone Hole? Never Mind"

6.17 Crafting a Powerful Title

The title of an essay precedes the beginning and should clarify the subject and arouse interest. The title, however, does not take the place of a beginning paragraph. In fact it is good practice to make an essay self-sufficient so that subject, purpose, plan (if needed) are all perfectly clear without reference to a title.

As to titles themselves, they should ideally be both informative and eye-catching. The title is an opportunity that should not be missed. It is difficult in practice to balance these qualities, and most titles come down on one side or the other; they are informative but not eye-catching, or unusual and attractive but not especially informative. In either case a title ought to be concise.

If you start your essay with a title in mind, be sure it fits the theme as it actually evolves. In the process of composition, essays have a way of taking unexpected twists and turns. For this reason, it may be well not to decide on a final title until you see what you have actually written.

6.17.1 Remember the Functions of a Title

As composition and rhetoric scholars Maxine Hairston and Michael Keene explain,

a good title does several things:

First, it predicts content.

Second, it catches the reader's interest.

Third, it reflects the tone or slant of the piece of writing.

Fourth, it contains keywords that will make it easy to access by a computer search. (73)

Keeping these functions in mind will help a writer choose a specific and meaningful title, not a mere label.

6.17.2   Think of Title-Writing as a Process, and Allow Yourself to Stretch Your Thinking During that Process.

Like any piece of writing, an effective title does not appear in one magic moment; it takes brainstorming and revising. Richard Leahy's "Twenty Titles for the Writer" exercise helps writers slow down and engage in the process of title-writing.

Although it can feel painstaking and a little silly, actually doing all the steps of Leahy's exercise takes your thinking in new directions, and almost always guarantees an interesting and effective title. (Of course, how you use the exercise is up to you.)

1. Copy out of your draft a sentence that could serve as a title.

2. Write a sentence that's not in the draft to use as a title.

3. Write a title that is a question beginning with What, Who, When, or Where.

4. Write a title that is a question beginning with How or Why.

5. Write a title that is a question beginning with Is/Are, Do/Does, or Will.

6. Pick out of the essay some concrete image—something the reader can hear, see, taste, smell, or feel—to use as a title.

7. Pick another concrete image out of the essay. Look for an image that is a bit unusual or surprising.

8. Write a title beginning with an -ing verb (like "Creating a Good Title").

9. Write a title beginning with On (like "On the Titles of Essays").

10. Write a title that is a lie about the essay. (You probably won't use this one, but it might stimulate your thinking.)

11. Write a one-word title—the most obvious one possible.

12. Write a less obvious one-word title.

13. Write a two-word title.

14. Write a three-word title.

15. Write a four-word title.

16. Write a five-word title.

17. Think of a familiar saying, or the title of a book, song, or movie, that might fit your essay.

18. Take the title you just wrote and twist it by changing a word or creating a pun on it.

19. Do the same with another saying or title of a book, song, or movie.

20. Find two titles you've written so far that you might use together in a double title. Join them together with a colon [:].

6.18 The Closing (Conclusion)

It is important to have a strong conclusion, since this is the last chance you have to make an impression on your reader. The goal of your conclusion isn't to introduce any new ideas, but to sum up everything you've written. Specifically, your conclusion should accomplish three major goals:

1. Restate the main idea of your essay, or your thesis statement

2. Summarize the three sub-points of your essay

3. Leave the reader with an interesting final impression

The paragraph below is an example conclusion. As you read, think about what each sentence accomplishes within the paragraph. What sentence(s) restates the essay's thesis statement? What sentence(s) summarizes the essay's three subpoints? What sentence(s) leaves the reader with an interesting final impression?

> ➤ Getting a better job is a goal that I would really like to accomplish in the next few years. Finishing school will take me a long way to meeting this goal. To meet my goal, I will also prepare my résumé and search for jobs. My goal may not be an easy one to achieve, but things that are worth doing are often not easy.

Notice that the first sentence restates the thesis. The second and third sentences summarize the essay's sub-points. Finally, the fourth sentence leaves the reader with an interesting final impression. No new information is presented in this paragraph. Instead, the writer sums up what has been written so far and leaves the reader with a last thought. While the content of the paragraph is very similar to the introduction, the paragraph itself is not exactly the same. This is important. Even though the goal of the conclusion is to restate a lot of the information from the introduction, it should sound different because the conclusion's purpose is slightly different from the introduction.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

Avoid the following when writing conclusions:

- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement that contains no substantive changes. Synthesize, don't summarize: Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.

- Introducing a new idea or subtopic (although you may end with a provocative question; see below).

- Focusing on a minor point in the essay.

- Concluding with a sentence tacked on to your final point.

- Apologizing for your view by saying such things as "I may not be an expert" or "At least this is my opinion."

- Attempting to make up for an incomplete structure. (If you say you will discuss four books and only attempt a complete discussion of two books, do not try to cover the remaining texts in a concluding paragraph. In such a situation, it's best to limit your paper to topics you can realistically cover.)

A conclusion should remind readers of the essay's main idea without repeating it. Often the concluding paragraph can be relatively short. By the end of the essay, readers should already understand your main point; your conclusion drives it home and, perhaps, gives readers something larger to consider.

In addition to echoing your main idea, a conclusion might

- briefly summarize your essay's key points (remember, synthesize)

- Evoke a vivid image or a memorable thought

- End with a warning

- propose a course of action

- offer a recommendation

- discuss the topic's wider significance or implications

- pose a question for future study or ask a provocative question

- Suggest results or consequences

6.18.1   *Terminating*

The most obvious function of a closing is to end the paper or writing piece. There are several ways of doing this:

6.18.1.1 Terminal Words

The simplest is to employ a word or phrase like in conclusion, concluding, finally, lastly, in the last analysis, to close, in closing, and so on. Adverbs showing a loose consequential relationship also work: then, and so, thus. Generally it is best to keep such terminal words unobtrusive. In writing, the best technique hides itself.

6.18.1.2 Circular Closing

This strategy works on the analogy of a circle, which ends where it began. The final paragraph repeats an important word or phrase prominent in the beginning, something the reader will remember. If the strategy is to work, the reader has to recognize the key term (but of course you cannot hang a sign on it—"Remember this"). You must stress it more subtly, perhaps by position or by using an unusual, memorable word. In an essay of any length it may be wise to repeat the phrase now and again, and sometimes writers emphasize the fact of completion by saying something like, "We return, then, to . . . . "

6.18.1.3 Summing Up

Termination is always a function of the closing paragraph or sentence. Sometimes, depending on subject and purpose, you may need to make a summary or to draw a conclusion, in the sense of a final inference or judgment. Summaries are more likely in long, complicated papers. Usually they are signaled by a phrase like *in summary, to sum up, summing up, in short, in fine, to recapitulate.* The label may be more subtle: "We have seen, *then,* that . . . , " and subtlety is usually a virtue in such matters.

On occasion logical conclusions may not be the best strategy, or even be possible, to round off an essay with a neat final judgment. The novelist Joseph Conrad once remarked that the business of the storyteller is to ask questions, not to answer them. That truth applies sometimes to the essayist, who may wish to suggest a judgment rather than to formulate one. The strategy

is called an *implicative closing.* The writer stops short, allowing the reader to infer the conclusion.

6.18.2   Emphasize the "So What"

If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go:

You: *Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.*

Friend: *So what?*

You: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.*

Friend: *Why should anybody care?*

You: *That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.*

You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.

6.19 Organizing the Middle

Just as an essay must begin and end well, so it must be clearly organized in between. An important part of a writer's job is assisting readers in following the organization. It can be done in two ways, which are often used together. One is by *signposts*— words, phrases, sentences (occasionally even a short paragraph) which tells readers what you have done, are doing, will do next, or even will not do at all. The other way is by *interparagraph transitions,* that is, words and phrases that tie the beginning of a new paragraph to what precedes it.

6.19.1   *Signposts*

The most common signpost is an initial sentence that indicates both the topic and the general plan of treating it. For instance, the scientist J. B. S. Haldane organizes a five-paragraph section of a long essay like this:

Science impinges upon ethics in at least five different ways. In the first place . . . Secondly. ..

Thirdly . . .

Fourthly . ..

Fifthly . . .

Some argue that because ordinal numbers (i.e., first, second, third, fourth, etc.) function as both adjectives and adverbs, the -ly adverbs firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, and so on are superfluous and too formal sounding. Shorter and less formal ordinal numbers work just as well—for example:

> ➢ And third, he doesn't account for greater or lesser degrees of liberalism or conservatism.
>
> ➢ Fourth, we urgently need to reform the Leaving Certificate and the CAO points system.
>
> ➢ And fifth, the easiest and most effective way to speculate on the price of oil is to leave the stuff in the ground, and there's not a thing the American government can do about that.

Sequence may be signaled by actual numbers or letters— usually enclosed in parentheses— rather than by words like *first, second, in the first place,* and so on. The poet W. B. Yeats explains why he believes in magic:

> ➤ I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundation of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are—
>
> 1. That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
>
> 2. That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
>
> 3. That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.

Numbers, however, and number words like *first, second, third,* must be handled cautiously. Overused, they confuse readers, losing them in a labyrinth of (l)s and (2)s and (a)s and (b)s.

Rather than using numbers, it is better, if possible, to set up an analysis by employing key terms. These identify the major points and can be repeated at the beginning of the appropriate paragraph or section. For example, the television critic Edith Efron, discussing soap operas, writes:

> ➤ Almost all dramatic tension and moral conflict emerge from three basic sources: mating, marriage and babies.

She begins the next paragraph by picking up the key word "mating": The mating process is the cornerstone of the tri-value system. And the following paragraph she opens by using the loose synonym "domesticity" to link "marriage and babies":

> ➤ If domesticity is a marital "good," aversion to it is a serious evil.

Signposts demand consistency. Once you begin using them you must carry through. Some writers make the mistake of starting off with something like this:

> ➢ There were three reasons why the pact was not satisfactory. First.

But then they fail to introduce the next two reasons with the obligatory *second* or *third* (or *secondly, finally).* The lack of signals may confuse readers who fail to recognize when the writer passes from one reason to another. Aside from setting up a group of paragraphs, signposts may also anticipate future sections of an essay or make clear what will not be treated. Few subjects divide neatly into watertight compartments. As you develop one point, you touch upon another that you do not plan to discuss fully until later or perhaps not to discuss at all. When this happens you may wish to give a warning.

Signposts may also point backward, reminding readers of something treated earlier which bears upon the current topic. Thus a writer may say "(See page 8)," or "As we saw in Section 7 . . . . "

The signposts we have looked at are *intrinsic*—that is, they are actually a part of the writer's text. There are also *extrinsic* signposts, ones that stand outside the actual discussion yet clue readers to its organization. An outline or a table of contents is such an extrinsic signal. So are Section titles, subtitles of sections, running heads at the top of each page. Typography and design convey other extrinsic indications of organization: the indentation of paragraph beginnings and of quotations, the extra spacing between lines to signal a new major section, and occasionally the numerals (usually Roman) centered above the division of an essay. Philosophical and scientific writers sometimes use a more elaborate system, beginning each paragraph with a two-part number, the first digit to designate the Section, the second the paragraph.

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6.19.2 Interparagraph Transitions

Transitions link a paragraph to what has immediately preceded it. They occur at or near the beginning of the new paragraph because it represents a turn of thought, needing to be linked to what has gone before. Transitions act like railroad switches, smoothing and easing the turn from one track to another.

6.19.2.1 The Repetitive Transition

The simplest type of transition repeats a key word. Writing about the Louisiana politician Huey Long, Hodding Carter ends one paragraph and begins the next with the following link (the italics are added in this and in all following examples, unless noted otherwise):

> ➢ Behind Huey were the people, and the people wanted these things. And with *the people behind him,* Huey expanded ominously.

A repeated word makes a strong and simple connection. It works well when the key term leading into the new paragraph occurs naturally at the end of the preceding one. But it is awkward and artificial when the term is forced into the final sentence merely to set up the transition

6.19.2.2 The Question-and-Answer Transition

A second way of linking paragraphs is to ask and answer a rhetorical question. Usually the question is placed at the end of the preceding paragraph and the answer at the beginning of the following one. Nancy Mitford, commenting upon the apparently compulsive need of tourists to travel, concludes one paragraph and opens the next like this:

> ➢ *Why do they do it?*
>
> *The answer is* that the modern dwelling is comfortable, convenient, and clean, but it is not a home.

Less often the question appears at the opening of the new paragraph, as in this discussion of the ultimate defeat of the Crusades:

> ➤ With want of enthusiasm, want of new recruits, want, indeed, of stout purpose, the remaining Christian principalities gradually crumbled. Antioch fell in 1268, the Hospitaler fortress of Krak des Chevaliers in 1271. In 1291, with the capture of the last great stronghold, Acre, the Moslems had regained all their possessions, and the great crusades ended, in failure.
>
> *Why? What went wrong?* There was a failure of morale clearly. . . . --Morris Bishop

The question-and-answer transition makes a very strong tie, but, as with the rhetorical question generally, it is too obvious a strategy to be called upon very often.

6.19.3   *The Summarizing Transition*

This link begins with a phrase or clause that sums up the preceding paragraph and then moves to the main clause, which introduces the new topic. (Unless idiom prohibits it, the elements of the transition should always be in that order: summary of old topic, statement of new one.) *If-* and *while-clauses* frequently carry such transitions:

> ➤ *If I went through anguish in botany and economics*—for different reasons—gymnasium was even worse. --James Thurber
>
> ➤ But *while Bernard Shaw pleasantly surprised innumerable cranks and revolutionists by finding quite rational arguments for them*, he surprised them unpleasantly also by discovering something else. --G. K. Chesterton

Long summarizing transitions tend to be formal in tone. On informal occasions it may be better to avoid a full *if-* or *while-clause,* and state the summary more briefly. Here, for example, a writer moves from the topic of college teaching methods to that of personal responsibility:

> Because of *these differences in teaching methods,* college throws more responsibility upon the student.

A summarizing transition may take even briefer form, using pronouns like *this, that, these, those,* or *such* to sum up the preceding topic. The historian J. Fred Rippy moves from the severe geographical conditions of South America to a discussion of its resources:

> These are grave handicaps. But Latin America has many resources in compensation.

Although the "these" in that example is perfectly clear, such pronouns can be ambiguous when used as the subjects of sentences, especially when they refer to the whole of a long, complex idea. If you do use such a pronoun in this way, be sure that readers understand what it refers to. Should there be a doubt, make the pronoun an adjective modifying a word or phrase that fairly sums up the preceding point: for example, *"These handicaps are grave."*

6.19.4   Logical Transitions

Finally, you may link paragraphs by words showing logical relationships: *therefore, however, but, consequently, thus, and so, even so, on the other hand, for instance, nonetheless,* and many, many more. In the following passage the historian and political scientist Richard Hofstadter is contrasting "intelligence" and "intellect." In the first paragraph he defines "intelligence." By placing the transitional phrase *on the other hand* near the beginning of the second paragraph, he signals the other half of the contrast:

> .. . intelligence is an excellence of mind that is employed within a fairly narrow, immediate, and predictable range. . . . Intelligence works within the framework of limited but clearly stated goals. Intellect, *on the other hand*, is the critical, creative, and contemplative side of mind.

Here is another example—a discussion of *Hamlet*—in which *moreover* indicates that the new paragraph will develop an extension of the preceding idea:

> ➢ If I may quote again from Mr. Tillyard, the play's very lack of a rigorous type of causal logic seems to be a part of its point. *Moreover,* the matter goes deeper than this. Hamlet's world is preeminently in the interrogative mode. --Maynard Mack

Logical connectives seldom provide the only link between paragraphs. Actually, they work in conjunction with word repetitions, summaries, pronouns. In fact, all the various transitional strategies we have looked at commonly occur in some combination. But whatever its form, an inter-paragraph transition should be clear and unobtrusive, shifting readers easily from one topic to the next.

6.19.5   Point of View, Persona, and Tone

6.19.5.1 Point of View

Thus far we have looked at how to begin and end essays and how to help readers follow the flow of thought. It remains to consider several other aspects of a composition, more abstract but no less important. These are point of view, persona, and tone. *Point of view* relates to how you present a subject. Two approaches are possible. In a *personal* point of view you play the role of writer openly, using "I," "me," "my." An *impersonal* point of view, on the other hand, requires that you avoid all explicit reference to yourself.

The difference is not that in a personal point of view the subject is the writer, while in an impersonal one it is something else. Every subject involves, though it is not necessarily *about,* the writer. The difference is a question of strategy. On many occasions one point of view or the other is preferable. Some topics so intimately involve the writer that they require a first-person presentation. It would sound silly to describe your summer vacation impersonally. Don't be afraid to use " I " if it fits your subject and purpose. On other occasions a personal point of view

is *not* appropriate. A scientist, writing professionally, usually tries to keep his or her personality below the surface, and properly so: scientific subjects are best treated objectively.

Of course many topics can be presented from either point of view, though the two approaches will result in different essays. In such cases you must consider occasion and reader and the degree of formality you want. An impersonal point of view seems more formal, a personal one less so.

Whichever you select, establish it in the opening paragraph. You needn't say, "My point of view will be personal [or impersonal]." Simply use " I " if you intend to write personally, or avoid it if you do not. (Such substitutes for " I " as "this observer," "your reporter," "this author" or "the writer" are wordy and awkward and best avoided.)

Maintain point of view consistently. Don't jump back and forth between a personal and an impersonal presentation. At the same time, you can make small adjustments. For example, you may expand " I " to "we" when you wish to imply "I the writer and you the reader." Whether writing personally or impersonally you may address readers as individuals by employing "you," or shift to "one," "anyone," "people," and so on, when you are referring to no one specifically.

But such shifts in point of view should be compatible with the emphasis you desire, and they should be slight. Radical changes, nine times in ten, are awkward. It is good practice, then, (1) to select a point of view appropriate to your subject, (2) to establish that point of view in the opening paragraph, and (3) to maintain it consistently.

6.19.5.2 Persona

Persona derives from the Latin word for an actor's mask (in the Greek and Roman theaters actors wore cork masks carved to represent the type of character they were playing). As a term in composition, *persona* means the writer's presence in the writing. The derivation from "mask" may be misleading. It does not imply a false face, a disguise, behind which the real individual

hides. A writer's *persona* is always "real." It is *there,* in the prose. The words you choose, the sentence patterns into which you arrange them, even the kinds of paragraphs you write and how you organize your essay, suggest a personality, which is, for that particular piece of writing, you.

But, you may object, a persona is not really the person who writes. *(Person,* interestingly enough, comes from the same Latin word.) Of course, that is true, and it is true that the same writer may assume different personas on different occasions. Still, the only contact readers generally have with a writer is through his or her words. For readers the persona implicit in those words is the real, existential fact about the writer

The question to ask about any persona is not, Is this really the writer? The questions are, Is it really how the writer wants to appear? And, Is it how he or she can best appear? To put the matter another way: Is the persona authentic and appropriate?

Authenticity means that the personality readers sense in your words is the personality you want them to perceive. To say that a persona is authentic does not necessarily mean that it is really you. We are all many different people, showing one face to friends, another to strangers, still another to the boss. Here authenticity simply means that how you appear in what you write is how you wish to appear.

But authenticity is not enough. A persona must also be appropriate, efficacious in the sense that it achieves your ends. At the very least it ought not to get in the way. Persona is most immediately and directly revealed when a writer discusses himself or herself. For instance, a clear personality emerges in the following passage from Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography.* Franklin is explaining that when he educated himself as a youth he learned to drop his habit of "abrupt contradiction, and positive argumentation" and to become more diffident in putting forward his opinions. (He is, of course, talking about the same thing we are—persona.)

> [I retained] the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence, never using when I advance any thing that may possibly be disputed, the words, *certainly, undoubtedly,* or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather I say, */ conceive,* or */ apprehend* a thing to be so or so, *It appears to me,* or */ should think it so for such & such reasons,* or */ imagine it to be so,* or *it is so if I am not mistaken.* This habit I believe has been of great advantage to me, when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions & persuade men into measures that 1 have been from time to time engag'd in promoting. And as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform,* or to be *informed,* to *please* or to *persuade,* I wish well-meaning sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive assuming manner that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given us, to wit, giving or receiving information, or pleasure: for if you would *inform,* a positive dogmatical manner in advancing your sentiments, may provoke contradiction & prevent a candid attention. If you wish information & improvement from the knowledge of others and yet at the same time express your self as firmly fix'd in your present opinions, modest sensible men, who do not love disputation, will probably leave you undisturb'd in the possession of your error; and by such a manner you can seldom hope to recommend yourself in *pleasing* your hearers, or to persuade those whose concurrence you desire.

Franklin strikes us as a discerning and candid man, sensitive to how he affects people, but sensitive in an unabashedly egocentric way. His advice about not coming on too strong— still worth heeding—is based not so much on concern for others as on a clear-eyed awareness that modesty is the way to get on in the world. Yet the very openness and ease with which Franklin urges that advice washes away its taint of selfserving manipulation. We sense a different personality in these paragraphs from Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography:*

> Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy—ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness— that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what—at least—I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

Russell is more emotional than Franklin. His attitude toward knowledge and toward other people is less self-serving and more passionate. He is driven to knowledge not because it serves his ambition but because of a compulsive desire to know (though Franklin too could show a disinterested quest for knowledge). Russell sees other people not as helps or hindrances to his career, but as fellow humans, for whose suffering he can feel compassion and sorrow. Yet there is more to Russell's persona than the obvious emotionalism. His feelings are constrained within a rational framework. The organization of his paragraphs is tightly analytical, and the whole passage can easily be reduced to an outline. Here is someone who not only feels intensely but whose intellect imposes order upon emotions, giving them a sharper focus. We sense a powerful, complex mind, in which emotion and reason are not at war but are reinforcing allies. Russell's passionate response to life gains intensity because it is shaped by reason.

Persona, as you can see, is a function of the *total* composition. It emerges not only from the meanings of words but also from the more abstract, less obviously expressive patterns of sentences and paragraphs and from overall organization. While most obvious in autobiographies, persona is not confined to such writing. It exists in all compositions. Even when a writer uses an impersonal point of view, avoiding "I," "me," "my," we sense a personality. In the following passage a historian is discussing dress and personal cleanliness in the Middle Ages:

> ➢ Hemp was much used as a substitute for flax in making linen; the thought of hemp curdles the blood. In the thirteenth-century romance *L'Escoufle* Sir Giles, beside the fire, removes all his clothes to scratch himself. (Fleas, no doubt.) --Morris Bishop

Such comments reveal writers as personalities, with their own ways of looking at the world—in Bishop's case with a pleasantly cynical humor. Even in relatively faceless writing there exists a persona. Here is Charles Darwin describing the mouth of a duck:

> ➢ The beak of the shoveller-duck *(Spatula clypeata)* is a more beautiful and complex structure than the mouth of a whale. The upper mandible is furnished on each side (in the specimen examined by me) with a row or comb formed of 188 thin, elastic lamellae, obliquely bevelled so as to be pointed, and placed transversely to the longer axis of the mouth.

Darwin's is an observant, precise mind. He refrains from saying more than facts allow: notice the qualification "(in the specimen examined by me)." Although he does allow emotion occasionally to show (a "beautiful... structure"), Darwin's tone is essentially sober, objective, painstaking, which, for his purpose, is exactly what it should be.

6.19.5.3 Tone

If persona is the complex personality implicit in the writing, tone is a web of feelings stretched throughout an essay, feelings from which our sense of the persona emerges. Tone has three main strands: the writer's attitude toward subject, reader, and self. Each of these determinants of tone is important, and each has many variations.

Writers may be angry about a subject or amused by it or discuss it dispassionately. They may treat readers as intellectual inferiors to be lectured (usually a poor tactic) or as friends with whom they are talking. Themselves they may regard very seriously or with an ironic or an amused detachment (to suggest only three of numerous possibilities). Given all these variables, the possibilities of tone are almost endless.

Tone, like persona, is unavoidable. You imply it in the words you select and in how you arrange them. It behooves you, then, to create an appropriate tone and to avoid those— pomposity, say, or flippancy—which will put readers off. Here are a few examples of how skillful writers make tone work for them.

Tone Toward Subject

Toward most subjects many attitudes are possible. Often tone is simple objectivity, as in these two paragraphs:

> ➢ Physical science is that department of knowledge which relates to the order of nature, or, in other words, to the regular succession of events. The name of physical science, however, is often applied in a more or less restricted manner to those branches of science in which the phenomena considered are of the simplest and most abstract kind, excluding the consideration of the more complex phenomena, such as those observed in living beings. --James Clerk Maxwell

Maxwell's purpose is to define physical science, not to express his feelings about it. His language, accordingly, is denotative and his tone objective and unemotional.

The writer of the following paragraph, on the other hand, is angry:

> ➢ *The Exorcist* is a menace, the most shocking major movie I have ever seen. Never before have I witnessed such a flagrant combination of perverse sex, brutal violence, and abused religion. In addition, the film degrades the medical profession and psychiatry. At the showing I went to, the unruly audience giggled, talked, and yelled throughout. As well they might. Although the picture is not X-rated, it is so pornographic that it makes *Last Tango in Paris* seem like a Strauss waltz. --Ralph R. Creenson, M.D.

And in this example an angry tone is expressed more subtly, beneath a surface of irony. The writer is describing the efforts of nineteenth-century laborers to improve their working conditions:

> ➢ [A]s early as June 8, 1847 the Chartists had pushed through a factory law restricting working time for women and juveniles to eleven hours, and from May 1, 1848 to ten hours. This was not at all to the liking of the manufacturers, who were worried about their young people's morals and exposure to vice; instead of being immured for a whole twelve

> hours in the cozy, clean, moral atmosphere of the factories, they were now to be loosed
>
> an hour earlier into the hard, cold, frivolous outer world. --Fritz J. Raddatz

Tone Toward Reader

You may think of your readers in widely different ways. Some writers tend to be assertive and dogmatic, treating readers as a passive herd to be instructed. The playwright and social critic George Bernard Shaw attacks the evils of capitalism in such a manner:

> ➤ Just as Parliament and the Courts are captured by the rich, so is the Church. The average
>
> parson does not teach honesty and equality in the village school: he teaches deference to
>
> the merely rich, and calls that loyalty and religion.

At the other extreme a writer may establish a more intimate face-to-face tone, as though talking to a friend. In the following case Ingrid Bengis is discussing the problem of being the "other woman" in a married man's life, of having to share him with his wife:

> ➤ One or the other of you is going to spend the night with him, the weekend with him,
>
> Christmas with him. (I've tried all three of us spending it together. Doesn't work.) One or
>
> the other of you is going to go on trips with him.

Bengis' informal, conversational tone depends on several things. For one, she addresses her readers directly, acknowledging their presence and bringing them and herself into a more intimate, and seemingly more equal, relationship. For another, she cultivates a colloquial style, one suggesting the voice of a friend: the contractions ("I've," "Doesn't") and the terse fragment ("Doesn't work").

A friendly informal tone need not be restricted to commonplace subjects. In much contemporary exposition, even of a scholarly sort, writers often relax the older convention of maintaining a

formal distance between themselves and their audience. Here, for instance, is a well-known scholar writing about Shakespeare:

> ➢ Great plays, as we know, do present us with something that can be called a world, a microcosm—a world like our own in being made of people, actions, situations, thoughts, feelings, and much more, but unlike our own in being perfectly, or almost perfectly, significant and Coherent. --Maynard Mack

While certainly not as colloquial as Ingrid Bengis, Mack acknowledges his readers ("As we know") and subtly flatters their intelligence and sophistication. Writers working for the illusion of a talking voice sometimes use italics to suggest the loudness and pitch by which we draw attention to important words. The historian Barbara Tuchman does this effectively in the following passage (she is arguing that freedom of speech does not require that we accept any and all pornography):

> ➢ The cause of pornography is not the same as the cause of free speech. There is a difference. Ralph Ginsburg is *not* Theodore Dreiser and this is not the 1920s.

Used sparingly, in that way, italics help to suggest a voice with which readers can connect. But note the caution: *sparingly.* Italics used for emphasis can easily become a mannerism, and then an annoyance.

Tone Toward Self

Toward himself or herself a writer can adopt an equally great variety of tones. Objective, impersonal exposition involves a negative presentation of the writer, so to speak. By avoiding personal references or idiosyncratic comments, he or she becomes a transparency through which we observe facts or ideas. A British writer discussing the Battle of Anzio in Italy during World War II begins like this:

> ➤ The full story of Anzio, which was originally conceived as a minor landing behind enemy lines but evolved through many ups and downs into a separate Italian front of major importance, needs a history to itself. Within the scope of the present work it is possible only to summarize the main events and their significance in so far as they affected the main front at Cassino. --Fred Majdalany

On the other hand, writers may be more self-conscious and deliberately play a role. In exposition it is often a good tactic to present yourself a bit deferentially, as Benjamin Franklin suggests in the passage quoted earlier. An occasional "it seems to me" or "I think" or "to my mind" goes a long way toward avoiding a tone of cocksureness and restoring at least a semblance of two-way traffic on that unavoidably one-way street from writer to reader. Thus a scholar writing about Chaucer's love poetry escapes dogmatism by a qualifying phrase:

> ➤ His early love complaints are less conventional than most and have the unmistakable ring, or so it seems to me, of serious attempts at persuasion. --John Gardner

A writer's exploitation of a self-image may go considerably beyond an occasional "I think." Humorous writers, for example, often present themselves as ridiculous.

> ➤ Every so often, when business slackens up in the bowling alley and the other pin boys are hunched over their game of bezique, I like to exchange my sweatshirt for a crisp white surgical tunic, polish up my optical mirror, and examine the corset advertisements in the New York *Herald Tribune* rotogravure section and the various women's magazines. It must be made clear at the outset that my motives are the purest and my curiosity that of the scientific research worker rather than the sex maniac. --S.J. Pereiman

Such role-playing is not quite the same as a persona. A writer's persona is reflected in all aspects of a composition, not simply in a self-caricature designed to amuse us or in the guise of

a deferential friend hoping to charm us. Beyond any momentary character the writer may be

playing is the creator of that role. It is that creator, that total intelligence and sensibility, which

constitutes the persona.

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Section 7: Enhancing Quality

If you project involves writing a term paper, a journal article or a report, you're probably engaged in what's called expository writing. Expository writing is usually informative and persuasive writing. The goal of the project is to have your reader respond: "Yes, I understand now. You've convinced me." This situation closely resembles that of an attorney facing a trial. The attorney, prosecuting or defending, first sizes up the jury (the audience). How sophisticated are they? What are their interests, prejudices, intellectual capacities? Are they a solemn bunch or do they smile at the attorney's jokes? The answers to those questions will determine the delivery—even, to some extent, the evidence the attorney presents. A prosecutor will not simply announce: "Ladies and gentlemen, the defendant is guilty. You can tell it from the mad glint in his eye. The State rests."

The jury (audience) is expecting the prosecutor to prove the defendant's guilt, and only facts plus cogent argumentation can prove anything. So she begins (the introduction) by stating the essence of her case (the thesis) in carefully formulated language. Then the prosecutor will spend the bulk of her remaining time (the middle) calling forth witnesses (the data, argument and evidence) to prove her case, saving the star exhibit for last so that the impact will be greatest. All the while, she's achieving many important things: anticipating and defusing any contentions from the defendant's attorney; demonstrating her own mastery of the facts of the case; clarifying what's really at issue and what's not; defining her exotic legal terms so the jury can grasp them; supporting each new charge with a wealth of factual proof; quoting authorities either to buttress he case or to freshen her eloquence; underscoring the logical sequence of her evidence; and providing the spellbound jurors with a running summary of how the pieces of the case interconnect.

Finally, she makes a closing appeal (the conclusion) to the jurors in which she neatly recaps the high points of her case—she knows they have short memories—and explains in the clearest

possible way why her version of the case is the only one a reasonable person could accept. The prosecutor has followed the age-old formula of debaters: "Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell it to them, and then tell them what you've told them." (This formula works only when it's kept discreetly veiled. The trick is to follow it without appearing to; otherwise the presentation sounds mechanical). Virtually everything our prosecutor did finds an exact correspondence in successful essay writing.

7.1 Writing the Expository Essay

Let's use these elements using a case study where a student is required to discuss his views on capital punishment. What position should he take? Personally, he is against it, but being an experienced college senior, he resolves to suppress his notions until he has thoroughly researched the topic.

7.1.1 A sure sense of the audience

Before this, it never occurred to him to size up his audience; he was simply writing for himself. Now he realizes that persuasion is vital to him, so he needs to second-guess his reader's needs, taste, and level of sophistication. He knows that this will determine, among other things, his choice of tone (serious, bantering, ironic, indignant), his diction (elegant, informal, tempered, blunt), his sentence structure (complex, occasionally complex, simple), and his mode of argument (technical, nontechnical, objective, subjective). All these decisions define the persona and the voice he thinks is most appropriate for the occasion. In his case, his audience is his professor, a bright, amiable fellow who is always warning his students, "Be polemical, but be practical."

7.1.2 A compelling research question

One of the most important steps in research is to arrive at a compelling question—not just any question. A compelling question is a question that's burning in your heart and asking for

answers, or a puzzle that's screaming for solutions. If all you can do is produce a yes-no question, that's not compelling enough. The compelling question contains the energy that will push the research forward. In the writer's case, after doing some extensive study, collecting lots of references and statistical data, quotations from authorities, and various arguments, he's asking himself "Does capital punishment work? He knows, as a researcher, that he needs to approach this question objectively, not from his personal point of view. He wants his essay to reflect that he has open-mindedly investigated the issues—the pros as well as the cons. He knows that if he doesn't do this, he won't be able to anticipate and defuse his reader's objections to his contentions—a crucial element in persuasive writing, just like in the courtroom. He arrives at a statement of purpose of arguing against capital punishment and at the same time provide local authorities with alternatives for solving the social issues associated with deviant behavior.

7.1.3 A well-defined thesis

He starts organizing his facts and evidence. For pre-writing he decides to use lists. Eventually he comes up with some 20 arguments favoring the abolition of capital punishment and another 20 favoring its retention. Having done the necessary homework, he begins writing his thesis statement:

> ➢ A gradual trend towards the abolition of capital punishment reflects a growing awareness that such extreme punishment doesn't make sense—economically, morally, pragmatically.

Reading this thesis, we can tell that the author had done his work before actually beginning to write. All that preparation gives him two advantages: he can write boldly, because he really knows his stuff; and he can set forth his arguments lucidly, because he understands exactly how they interconnect. His thesis above is clear and deliciously convincing.

The thesis should be placed right where it ought to be for greatest effect—at the climactic end of the first paragraph or the end of the first section. He leads into it with an opening statement that already argues for the thesis, and primes us for his major assertion, and discreetly implies his recognition that the assertion may be considered debatable by the reader. We are to know, in other words, that he isn't arrogantly advancing this notion as a statement of fact, but rather as an opinion. Nevertheless, it's a firmly held opinion, and we admire his courage for stating it so unequivocally. He's not waffling with us; instead, he's boldly crawling out on an interpretive limb.

7.1.4 A clear strategy

He now arrives at the next step: weighing these arguments. This process is mainly intuitive and unconscious rather than rational. Until he can prove it to himself, using a coherent line of reasoning, he knows he won't be able to prove it to the reader. In practical terms, this means showing precisely how he reached his position, step by step. He decides to classify his arguments into major groups set by his thesis statement—moral reasons, economic reasons, political reasons, legal reasons—and analyze how they all add up, how they interconnect. He knows his reader expect the proof of his thesis sorted into neat, logically developing stages. While classifying his arguments, he needs to decide the sequence to present them. This is a tactical decision. Some of the reasons are more persuasive than others. Should the most persuasive come first, or should he build his arguments from least persuasive to most persuasive, or should he mix them? He puts himself in the reader's shoes and decides that if *he* were reading this essay cold, he'd be most convinced by quality, not quantity, and also by an increasingly persuasive order or arguments.

The plan of attack could hardly be more explicit—or more beautifully simple: three major arguments, one per paragraph or section. This is what Mencken had in mind when he spoke of "the importance of giving to every argument a simple structure." He begins each idea or argument with clear signposts that signal the idea or the argument. Notice the progression in the

persuasiveness of the examples. Each stronger than the last, thus building an intellectually and aesthetically satisfying climax. Not a word is wasted.

7.1.5 Strong evidence

The thesis statement provides him with an immaculately simple structure for his essay. It lets him plunge right into explaining the economic reasons in the paragraph after the introduction:

> ➢ Considered from a coldly economic point of view, capital punishment is a waste of human resources. Instead of killing a man, society should take advantage of his ability to work and pay restitution.

The next sentences in this paragraph develop support for that contention—part of the support being an example of a country that has tried this plan successfully. His next paragraph develops other economic reasons buttressing this one, with the strongest reserved for last:

> ➢ Nor let us overlook the staggering court costs. With capital punishment, a single, speedy trial is unheard of. Almost invariably a case will be retried repeatedly as the condemned person exhausts every possible appeal and delay.

He ends the section with a brief summary of his arguments up to that point.

7.1.6 Telling the Story

Every research paper should have a story to tell. Stories are not limited to narrative research. The data that is presented with the research should tell a story. Stories can help set up a research project and put it in terms that readers can relate to. If the story is a stretch or unrealistic, it may mean the research has a fundamental flaw. The telling of stories can start even in the earliest stage of a project, during literature reviews, problem formulation. Story gathering and story making/building can help both researchers and readers make sense of complex interconnected situations.

In the case of our writer, with this stage of his argument completed, he pulls together the story against capital punishment by moving on to the next set of evidence, the moral reasons. These, he knows, are stronger.

> ➤ But beyond the mere economics of the issue, capital punishment is a moral outrage. First, it is a basic violation of the Judeo-Christian ethic, the cornerstone of our democratic society.

He supports this contention by quoting authorities such as Jesus, Clarence Darrow, and George Bernard Shaw, all of whom argue that compassion rather than merciless revenge is the most civilized form of justice. Here he takes the opportunity to counter a probable objective—with the Old Testament notion that "an eye for an eye" is just—using the Old Testament commandment preceding it: "Thou shalt not kill." Then in the next paragraph, he moves on to his second argument in this group:

> ➤ Furthermore, capital punishment—which is essentially a lynch mob by proxy—lowers the standard of public morality. In effect, it encourages barbarism by the state—indeed, it brings society down to the level of a ruthless murderer. Once the state has the power to murder with the grace of the statute book, historically it loses all sense of proportion. We have seen this happen in Great Britain in the 18th century, when even the pettiest crimes were thought fit for punishment at the gallows.

After developing this point, he's ready for his third and strongest moral argument, which he sets off in another new paragraph:

> ➤ Finally, and most seriously, capital punishment strikes at the very basis of morality itself. Morality rest upon the fact that we are mere mortals, frail and imperfect in our understanding, not infallible. By contrast, capital punishment presumes that man can set

himself up as God, and that juries never make mistakes. The moral presumption in this is surely as great as that of the criminal who takes the life of his victim.

Now he begins his main attack—the pragmatic reasons. With the gusto of Churchill on D-Day he opens a new paragraph:

> ➢ Both economically and morally, then, capital punishment simply doesn't make sense. But the most damaging indictment against the practice is pragmatic: It fails to achieve its purpose, which is the deterrence of crime. Now why does it not deter a criminal? Because it rests upon a false assumption: that murder or rape, for example, is committed consciously, is premeditated. But this is patently not so. Most capital crimes are crimes of passion, committed unthinkingly in the heat of the moment. The criminal never considers punishment.

To support that reasoning, he cites statistics to show that the vast majority of murders are committed within the family, and that murder rates in states with the death penalty are no lower than in states without it. He also cites once more the example of Great Britain, where public execution of pickpockets did not prevent the spectators from being deprived of their wallets.

There are no bumps in this essay. Each sentence, each paragraph, is hinged on the one that precedes it. The author is able to achieve this fine continuity because he had a clear plan of attack: he knew what he wanted to say and what he had to prove. When you know precisely where your essay has to go, you can "tell" your argument as simply and coherently as if it were a story, which in a sense it is. But the continuity is also the result of careful craftsmanship.

1. Notice the use of conjunctive or transitional adverbs to open sentences: "Considered from …" "Instead of …" "Furthermore."

2. Notice the use of syntactic patterning to compare and contrast: Comparing killing a man with taking advantage of his ability to work and pay restitution; how capital punishment contrast with the basis of morality

3. Parallel structures of what capital punishment is or does: "capital punishment is a waste of human resources," "capital punishment is a moral outrage," "a basic violation …," "lowers the standard of public morality."

All this work organizes the ideas for us; they silently tell us how the pieces of the argument relate to one another. Good writers are sticklers for continuity. They won't let themselves write a sentence that isn't clearly connected to the ones immediately preceding and following it. They want their prose to flow, and they know this is the only way to achieve that beautiful effect.

But how are these connections to be made? The better the writer, the less need he has for mechanical means of connecting his ideas, too many of which tend to clutter an argument. Instead, he relies chiefly on a coherent understanding of what he wants to say, a simple style, the occasional repetition of key words, and the careful use of pronouns such as *this* and *that*. In manner he resembles a furniture maker who uses interlocking tongues and grooves to do the work of nails and screws.

Sometimes, though, a situation will require a more explicit connection—such as when the direction of the argument is turning or when an idea is to be paralleled or contrasted with an earlier idea. In these situations, the writer will call upon a conjunctive adverb or brief transitional phrase to signal the kind of thought that's coming up next. This signposting of arguments can take many forms: some are bookish and formal, others are conversational. They are discussed in more detail in Section 4 Developing Paragraphs and the Document. Several are reproduced below with the conversational version in parentheses. The equivalence is approximate, not perfect. The formal adverbs afford greater variety and precision in meaning—which is why we encounter them more often in books than in conversations:

Above all	In particular
Accordingly (and so)	Instead
Admittedly	In summary
Again	Likewise (and)
Also	Moreover
Besides	More specifically (for example)
But	Nevertheless (But)
Certainly	Nonetheless
Consequently (and so)	On the other hand
Finally	Rather (However, instead)
First	Second
For example	Similarly
For instance	So
Furthermore	Still
Hence (therefore)	Then
However	Therefore
In addition (besides, also)	Though
In conclusion	Thus (Therefore, so)
Indeed (in fact)	To sum up
In fact	Yet

The sheer number of transitional words indicates, among other things, just how important signposting an argument really is. Continuity doesn't magically happens; it's *created*. The surest way your reader will know how your ideas connect is by your telling her. These are the words you tell her with. They remind you to give your reader the directional signs she needs. Keeping this list propped up before you will save you word-hunting; and it will suggest an occasional new avenue of thought simply by tempting your mind to explore other directions of argument—a "nevertheless" thought perhaps, or a "consequently," or a "for example."

7.1.7 A persuasive closing

The author may get tired after writing a long essay. He might think that because the piece is virtually done anyway—"I've made my main points"—he can stop there. The reader won't accept an argument that merely stops. The reader wants to see the thing end, to enjoy a sense of closure: "Every reader wants his final reward." The reader also wishes to recall what she's read. Her sense of the piece is bound to be colored by the last sentences she reads. So the author needs to make the ending memorable—as powerful as the opener or even more. The reader may or may not be convinced at this point, so the closing has to be utterly convincing.

The closing is perhaps half-summary, half-conclusion, similar to the prosecutor's closing appeal to the jury. He neatly sums up the high points of his evidence, re-explaining why his argument is reasonable. He also takes care to point out its important implications, so that the reader will be convinced that the argument is substantial. He makes the whole paragraph self-contained and packed so that it could serve as a fair substitute for the essay itself, as indeed it may in his reader's overworked memory. And he finishes off with a sentence that has such a satisfying finality that his last period feels unnecessary.

As he approaches the end of the essay, he next argues:

> So capital punishment doesn't work. But when we try to force it to work, we find that we can't even administer it fairly. First, there is the economic bias: the rich always pay their way out, while the poor will die. Second, the meting out of the death penalty often depends upon *whom* you kill, for human life is not valued equally.

He he gives examples of criminals who were executed for killing public figures, while fellow criminals who killed people of lesser renown were paroled in three years. In the conclusion, he succinctly recapitulates his chief arguments and draws out their full implications—perhaps especially the implications of ignoring them. He's saying in essence, "Here's what follows if you don't buy these arguments," Then he ends with a sentence neatly summarizing his case:

> The evidence all in, the conclusions are inescapable: economically the proponent of capital punishment is a waster, morally he is a bankrupt, and pragmatically he is a fool.

For an average research paper—the above formula is ideal. For shorter papers, you can take liberties with his formula. No matter what the shape of the paper, there remain three imperatives in the closing:

1. Focus on your main point (which may be your final point)

2. Gratify the reader with at least one last new twist or phrase to make your point memorable.

3. End with emotional impact.

7.2 Further Tips for Perfecting the Middle

1. Well, what does it finally add up to? This is the reader's invariable question. Your essay is the reply: "It finally adds up to this, in my opinion…." Don't start writing the final draft until you have asked yourself the reader's question and understand clearly your intended reply. If you reply contains an original insight, if it's debatable, and if you're been able to state in a sentence, it's a good thesis. Now go ahead and prove it.

2. Think yourself as a prosecuting attorney, think of your writing as a case, and think of your reader as a highly skeptical jury.

3. To prove your case, you'll generally have to substantiate several things. The prosecutor for example, must substantiate that the defendant had the motive, the means, and the opportunity to commit the crime. You have to determine what you need to substantiate, classify your evidence according to those things, and then substantiate them one at a time. This is called "dividing up the proof." If you follow this procedure, you'll find that structuring your essay is relatively simple.

4. Signpost your argument every step of the way. If you have three important pieces of evidence to support a particular contention, tell your reader so she can understand precisely where you're going. Similarly, if you have three arguments and if one is stronger than the others, save it for later and label it as the strongest. For instance: "Finally and most seriously, capital punishment strikes at the very basis of morality itself."

5. Assertions are fine, but unless you prove them with hard evidence, they remain simply assertions. So, *assert, then support; assert, then support; assert, then support*—and so on throughout your essay. Remember, examples and facts are the meat of it. They do the actual convincing; the all have their own eloquence.

6. Some paragraphs, like transitional and one-sentence paragraphs, are special-occasion devices and follow their own rules. The normal paragraph should resemble a good essay: it has unity by virtue of being organized around a single major point. Several examples may be brought in to support that point, and several ideas to qualify it, and several sentences to illuminate its implications, but there's still only *a single major point*.

7. Instead of viewing the opening sentence of each paragraph as a topic sentence, try viewing each paragraph opener as a bridge sentence aimed at smoothing our way into

the new paragraph. The reader should not come to a new paragraph wondering: "Where am I? How did I get here? Continuity doesn't magically happen; it's created.

7.3 Enhancing Diction

Good writing from proper diction, concision and clarity, is described in detail in Section 5 Clarity and Writing Well. In this section we describe strategies to further enhance various aspects of diction.

7.3.1 Concision

This section is about where deadwood comes from and how it may be avoided. Often they are found in long, ready-made phrases, which have the added attraction of sounding elegant. What secretary or bureaucrat doesn't feel indebted to the coiner of "please be advised." "enclosed please find," "thanking you in advance," and "in reference to your of …."? This habit of thinking in prefab phrases slowly dulls our sensitivity to words as words. It's inevitable. We may hear someone say "at this point in time" and pride ourselves on recognizing this phrase as a cliché, but we'll probably not notice that it is redundant. What does i*n time* say that at this point doesn't already say?

Good writing starts with a profound respect for words—their denotations, their connotations, their force, their rhythm. Once you learn to respect them, you'll develop a passion for using them thriftily. Why use three or four words if one says the same thing? Why say "in the event that" when you can say "if"? Or "in order to" when you can say "to"? Or "for the reason that" when you can say "since"? Why write "They speak with great bitterness" when you can write "They speak bitterly"?

A skilled writer writes as if she were paid a dime for each word she *deletes.* Her prose is concise. Every word in every sentence works at maximum efficiency; the total effect suggests power, purpose, and speed. Here's an example of how writing can be made more concise:

> ➤ #His bold and brash temper has been replaced by a careful and prudent manner.

Some words in this example are not pulling their weight. We can start by deleting *bold and* since bold and brash are synonyms. Alternatively, *brash temper* could be replaced by *brashness* or *impetuosity*. *Impetuosity* sounds fresh. Careful and prudent are redundant, so *careful and* could be deleted. *Prudent manner* could be replaced with one word that would parallel impetuosity and tighten the contrast. The answer is simple: *prudence.* The revised sentence then looked like:

> ➤ His impetuosity has been replaced by prudence.

The revised sentence has half the number of words of the original. Less is more. A good writer will tinker like this with every sentence, going back over each of them laboriously, even obsessively, until satisfied that she cannot make any of them any more succinct without sacrificing clarity. The skillful writer is prepared to take many more pains to say it cleanly.

7.3.2 Vigor

Observe these two sentences:

> ➤ Bill climbed the mountain
>
> ➤ The mountain was climbed by Bill

The normal word order in English is "X does Y" not "Y is being done by X." The active voice is simpler plus it gives us first things first. What most of us want to know first is who or what is starring in the story. If the actor appeals to us, we'll want to learn more—namely what that person or thing has done. So the "X does Y" pattern respects the natural path of our curiosity. But there is another reason for our preference: We find it easier to process a story when the *grammatical subject* and the *actor* are the same. In "Bill climbed the mountain," the two certainly are: "Bill" is the grammatical subject as well as the actual subject, or actor—the person who did

the climbing. But in "The mountain was climbed by Bill," we have two subjects. The grammatical subject is "mountain," while the actor—the real subject, is "Bill." And we don't learn of his identity until the end, which is way late. Hence our sense in that phrase of indirectness, of backing in. That's a typical feeling with passive construction.

So, in the active voice, the grammatical subject is doing whatever the verb describes. We call the verb passive when its grammatical subject isn't doing anything; instead, it's being *done to*. Active verbs move us forward; passive verbs move us backward. Active verbs give us the actor up front; passive verbs make us wait to learn the actor.

A sometimes we never learn the actor, either because the writer forgot to add a "by Bill" or because he chooses so. That can be exasperating. Here's another point to remember:

A passive verb always includes some form of the verb be—is, are, was, were, has been, or have been—plus a past participle. Contrary to popular belief, "is" alone isn't passive. Inert, yes; passive, no.

Good prose is *direct, definite*. Like a firm handshake, it betokens and inspires confidence. It tells the reader: "You're in good hands with me and I have worked out my views on this subject and believe it makes sense, so I'm giving it to you just as I see it. I respect you too much to waste your time with hedged prose, and I respect myself too much to come across as wishy-washy. Sure, we'll probably disagree here and there, but at least we'll both know where we disagree."

Weak prose, conversely, is *roundabout, vague*. Like a limp handshake, it betokens insecurity. It implies to the reader: "I'm truly afraid of you and afraid of being me, too. I'm not even sure what I think about this subject, so I can't give it to you straight. Being vague is the only refuge I have. It lets me get by with sort-of-understanding, and it also disarms you a bit since you'll have difficulty knowing where you disagree with me."

Many style elements contribute to these impressions, but probably none more than the choice of verbs. Why? *Because the verb acts as the power center of most sentences*. If a writer's verbs are active, fresh, and definite, her sentences will have snap; they'll impress us with her spirit and conviction. But if her verbs lack oomph, or if she backs into her ideas with a lot of passives, her sentences will sag; they'll convince us of her dullness and diffidence. *Because every sentence normally has at least one verb, the aggregate effect of a writer's verbs is huge*. The American Declaration of Independence illustrates this point well. Its authors wanted to do two things: justify the colonists' claims to independence and galvanize them into open rebellion. Both end they accomplished with superb effect. How? Mainly by using vigorous, unequivocal verbs. Of the 1,500 words in the document, only a dozen or more are passive constructions. The others have zing, like these: "[King George III] has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people."

Sometimes, the passive voice is actually desirable. You may want to emphasize the effect of a particular action: "Charles alone was injured in the accident." Or you may want to soften the phrasing of an idea: "You'd be advised to leave now." Or you may be ignorant of the agent performing the action: "The ransom note was left in the mailbox." And sometimes it doesn't matter who performed the action: "Our stadium was rebuilt in 1998."

Generally though, the active voice is preferable. You'll be astonished at how much this alone invigorates your style. Try to recast as many is and are constructions as possible—especially the expletives (there is, there are, there were) and impersonal constructions (it is, it was), which allow you to amble past the subject and verb positions of the sentence without having said a thing. Remember the last example:

> ➢   #His impetuosity has been replaced by prudence.

Using a vigorous verb, the sentence above becomes:

> ➢ Prudence now tempers his impetuosity.

> ➢ #It is said that power is corrupting
>
> ➢ Power corrupts.
>
> ➢ #Meaning was found by Freud in everything.
>
> ➢ Freud found meaning in everything.
>
> ➢ #There were two hundred guests in attendance at the party.
>
> ➢ Two hundred guests attended the party.
>
> ➢ #It was decided to destroy the evidence.
>
> ➢ [?] decided to destroy the evidence.

Choosing a verb tends to be automatic since it reflects an attitude—toward oneself, our reader, and our subject. We should be confident enough to instinctively assert what we know—and assert it straight out. But if we feel insecure about our ideas, we'll unconsciously turn to the passive voice as a refuge. With every piece you ought to read it at least once looking exclusively at the verbs. The investment in time will pay rich dividends.

7.3.3 Freshness

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning. –Mark Twain.

"There is no deodorant like success." – Elizabeth Taylor. We read this and smile. What captivates us? It is the perfect freshness and whimsical aptness of the image. Every time we write, we have opportunities to delight our reader with arresting phrases like that one. Here's another:

"the drama, which develops at about the speed of creeping crab grass …"

In research, the sentences may not be as dramatic, but the opportunities exist nevertheless. Here are some example of fresh statements made by famous researchers:

"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts."

  - Bertrand Russell

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use."

  - Galileo Galilei

"All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."

  - Arthur Schopenhauer

"The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth."

  - Niels Bohr

Each of these researchers instinctively understands one of the chief secrets of artful writing: you have to keep the reader in a state of near-perpetual surprise. Not suspense, but *surprise*. It's like baseball. A skilled pitcher mixes up his pitches. He'll throw a fastball, then a curve, maybe a change-up, then a knuckleball. Skilled writers work the same way. They're constantly feeding our appetite for novelty, be it with a fresh idea, a fresh phrase, or a fresh image.

To write creatively—to come up with "a consistent succession of tiny, unobservable surprises" – Ford Madox Ford, we must *want* to. Each time we set down a sentence we much ask ourselves,

"Now, how can I express this more memorably?" Occasionally, just adding a choice adjective is all that's needed:

> ➤ He wrote with a *surgical* indifference to feelings. – William Nolte

More frequently, adjusting the verb—the engine of the sentence—will bring the desired effect:

Here's Thomas Kuhn describing his concept of the "paradigm":

> ➤ The new paradigm *implies* a new and more rigid definition of the field. Those *unwilling* or *unable* to *accommodate* their work to it must *proceed* in isolation or *attach* themselves to some other group.

The use of several powerful verbs add clarity to his definition.

7.4   Enhancing Style

Writing style was introduced in Section 5 Clarity and Writing Well and in Section 6 Writing Research, as the totality of choices a writer makes concerning words and their arrangement, which can be sensed in the writing. This broad definition is qualified by other definitions: Style as the result of writing strategy; the essence of the writing; and can include diction, tone, the use of figurative language and other aspects. In this section, we elaborate on these other various aspects of style to enhance the quality of the writing.

7.4.1 Research Readability

A readable style is one that invites reading. That circular definition requires elaboration for when we ask what makes a style readable, we move into personal taste. For example, the reader may require certain things from the author. The author has to have something fresh to say— something that will teach or amuse me. If he doesn't, the reader stops reading. Second, the author should not waste the reader's time in getting out what he has to say. If the author idles, the reader will feel better off reading someone else. Beyond this, the reader needs to see the

author come across as a vital, companionable human being, not a stuffed shirt or emotionally unfeeling. "I like an author to talk to me, unbend to me, speak right out to me. If the prose has a natural, conversational rhythm to it, if it's forged out of homespun English rather than highbrow English, if it's stamped with the mark of a quirky personality, if it carries the ring of honesty and passionate conviction, then the writer has captured my attention. I like an author to be natural, warts and all. It shows that he or she trusts me enough to show vulnerability and not be afraid of me."

Such style of writing is near extinct in research and scholarly work and this is unfortunate. What is being reinforced here is the popular dogma that only a lofty, formal style is appropriate in serious writing. That dogma not only strengthens our feeling that we must be something we're not, but also teaches us *how* to strike the godlike pose. The problem with formal style is that although it may satisfy the need for precision and conciseness, it tends to lack ease and freshness, since it inhibits variety of diction, simplicity, and anything offbeat. Its self-consciousness is both its virtue and its limitations. It promotes writing marked by stilted diction, abstract phraseology, frozen sentence rhythms and so on.

> ➤ #The final step in Lord Morris's preparation to introduce the precedents in his consideration of the idea of conviction despite the presence of duress and then intermediate pardon for that crime as an unnecessary step which is in fact injurious for it creates the stigma of the criminal on a potentially blameless (or at least no criminal) individual.

The solution to this problem may be in using General English—a happy compromise between formal and informal style. It is conversational in tone, unaffected, idiomatic, straightforward—but also beautifully wrought. The phrasing is tight and precise; the diction, fresh and apt.

Considerable labor has been lavished on such style. It seems to be happy accidents, which is precisely the intended effect.

> ➢ Before Lord Morris introduces the precedents, he considers a final issue: If a court convicts a defendant who acted under duress and then immediately pardons that defendant, the court may have taken an unnecessary step, a step that may even injure the defendant, if it stigmatizes him as a criminal when he may be blameless.

As E.B. White states:

> ➢ The main thing I try to do is to write as clearly as I can. Because I have the greatest respect for the reader, and if he's going to the trouble of reading what I've written—I'm a slow reader myself and I guess most people are—why, the least I can do is to make it easy as possible for him to find out what I'm trying to say, trying to get at. I rewrite a good deal to make it clear.

Writing a formal style is easy—just hauling out all the high-sounding, impersonal phrases you've seen other people use. But writing a good "General English" style is hard, because it requires a sophisticated control of tone and mingling of contraries: formal and informal diction, objectivity and subjectivity, impersonality and directness, and to get the right mix without taking a tumble. Franklin Roosevelt, instead of adopting a lofty presidential style in his periodic radio addresses to the American people, ignored convention, choosing to give what he called "fireside chats"— personal, down-to-earth talks laced with colloquialisms and jokes. He figured that the average citizen like himself would prefer relaxed plain talk to studied oratory and he was proven right. Those talks helped make him one of the most endearing of modern presidents.

Here are several ways of improving readability:

1. View your reader as a companionable friend—someone with a warm sense of humor and a love of simple directness. Write like you're actually talking to that friend, but talking with enough leisure to frame your thoughts concisely and interestingly.

2. As a rule of thumb, whenever you've written three longish sentences in a row, make your fourth one a short one. Don't fear the super-short sentence. It's arresting. Sometimes just a single word will be plenty long:

> ➢ Many American parents think that today's colleges are veritable breeding grounds for premarital sex. Nonsense. Each year, literally tens of students graduate with their virtue still intact. – Gregg Hopkins.

That last sentence, by the way, illustrates the literary knuckleball, an axiom in aesthetics: "The smaller the sign, the greater the pleasure." The writer counts on our tendency to read it as "tens of thousands" only to be forced to make a double take.

3. Use occasional contractions. They'll help you unbend and let your readers relax as well. They are like kisses not to be bestowed too freely. Save them for when you want to humanize some sentence.

4. Generally, prefer *that* to *which*. The former is conversational. Save which for after a comma, to introduce a nonrestrictive clause:

5. If you mean "I" say "I". Don't use pomposities like "the writer" or "one" or "the author". Reserve "we" and "our" for those situations where you're referring to both your reader and yourself. Reserve "one" for when you mean a person as in "One would have to be a CPA to grasp that." When generalizing about readers or people, go ahead and use "we" and "our," they are conversational and democratic.

6. Use dashes to isolate concluding phrases for emphasis or humor.

7. Professionals quote, amateurs paraphrase. Use dialogue wherever your context warrants it—it's dramatic.

8. The more abstract your argument, the more you should lace it with what are called "word pictures"—illustrations, analogies, vivid quotations, metaphors, similes. These aid not only your readers' understanding but also their memory.

9. Minimize your adjectives. Try to let nouns—especially accurate nouns—work alone. This will simplify your style and give it more point. Voltaire said "the adjective is the enemy of the noun." Twain said, "As to the adjective, when in doubt, strike it out."

10. Minimize your adverbs too—especially trifle intensifiers like *very, extremely, really,* and *terribly*. The use of these words diminish the word that follows, making it feel weak. When you cut the intensifier, your phrasing usually gains intensity. Which sounds hungrier, "very hungry" or "ravishing"? But the right adverb, fresh and adroitly placed, is one of life's finest pleasures. Observe the following:

> ➤ James Donnelly of Whole Earth inked very page of the manuscript bright red with line-editing corrections, for which I am *whimperingly* grateful.

11. Use the fewest words possible and the simplest words possible. Occasionally, the longer word will work best—it may express the idea concisely, or contribute just the cadence and texture wanted, or gratify your reader with the joy of surprise. But be warned: the more you surrender to the temptations to write fancy, the further you'll stray from your true feelings and the more you'll write in a style designed to impress rather than to serve your reader.

12. Be sure that each sentence is somehow connected to the ones immediately before and after it.

13. In a long essay, summarize your arguments every now and then so that readers can keep their bearings. This makes for a welcome change of pace, and show the steps in the writer's argument.

14. If you like putting questions to your reader, answer them promptly. If for example, you've raised a question at the end of the opening paragraph, the opening sentence of the next paragraph should answer the question. You've created an expectation that needs to be gratified.

15. Use semicolons to reduce choppiness, particularly when you have several sentences with parallel structures.

16. Read your prose aloud. Always read your prose aloud. Do you sound comfortable with your own ideas? Do you sound at ease with your reader? Can you read each sentence without stumbling? Does the phrasing sound like you're talking from the top, or does it sound alien? Does your prose flow along? Have you managed to avoid unconscious word repeats?

17. Instead of using "first" or "second," occasionally use the numerals in parenthesis.

18. Numbers are tricky. Spell out the numbers below 10, use figures for 10 and above.

19. When you begin with a sentence with And and But, don't put a comma after it.

20. *So* and *Yet* make great lead-offs.

21. As a sentence starter, prefer *But* to *However.* It's cleaner.

22. Do you have a good wit? If so, share it.

23. Paragraphing is hugely important. But a cookie-cutter paragraphs-say-two per page—can suggest a tired imagination. Use variety to keep things alive and vital.

24. Use white space creatively, e.g. 2-4 spaces when introducing an outline.

25. Choose your title with care. Avoid teasing titles. Focus instead on making your title descriptive and try to give it a zing as well.

26. If you've written a paragraph that sounds labored, back off and ask yourself, "How would I say this to a friend"?

27. Take a short break and read some paragraphs of a writer you relish. Soak in the style.

7.4.2 Research Clarity

In research clarity is of the outmost importance because in this kind of writing, the author is trying to communicate difficult concepts to a reader that may not be familiar with those concepts. Clarity was introduced in Section 5 Clarity and Writing Well, and in this section, we elaborate on how clarity can be achieved especially in research.

In research, the reader should not be forced to work harder than she needs to. Observe this following example:

> ➤ #Decisions in regard to the administration of medication despite the inability of irrational patients voluntarily appearing in Trauma Centers to provide legal consent rest with a physician alone.

This sentence makes us work hard because we have to sort out and then mentally re-assemble several actions expressed mostly as abstract nouns—decision, administration, medication, inability, consent—actions that are also arranged in a way that both distorts their underlying sequence and obscures who performs them. When we revise the abstract nouns into verbs expressing actions, when we make their actors the subjects of those verbs and rearrange the events into a chronological sequence, we create a sentence that we could call "clear" because as we read it, it does not confuse us:

> ➤ When a patient voluntarily appears at a Trauma Center but behaves so irrationally that he cannot legally consent to treatment, only a physician can decide whether to administer medication.

Here's another example of unclear writing:

> ➤ #China, so that it could expand and widen its influence and importance among the Eastern European nations, in 1955 began in a quietly orchestrated way a diplomatic offensive directed against the Soviet Union.

In this case, the sentence is unclear not because of too many abstract nouns, displaced its actors or confused the sequence of events, but because the sentence is separated awkwardly and used more words than needed. Here's the revised version:

> ➤ In 1955, China began to orchestrate a quiet diplomatic offensive against the Soviet Union to expand its influence in Eastern Europe.

7.4.2.1 Telling Stories in Research

One of the best styles that supports quality research is storytelling. It is fundamental to human behavior and no other forms of prose can communicate large amounts of information so quickly and persuasively. At first glance, most academic and scholarly writing seems to consist not of narration but of explanation. But even prose that may seem wholly discursive and abstract usually has behind it the two central components of a story—characters and their actions. The following example can be rewritten as a story by explicitly using the characters and their actions:

> ➤ #The current estimate is of a 50% reduction in the introduction of new chemical products in the event that compliance with the Preliminary Manufacturing Notice becomes a requirement under proposed Federal legislation.

The revised version makes the characters of the story and their actions visible and results in a clearer story to tell.

> ➢ If Congress requires that the chemical industry comply with the Preliminary Manufacturing Notice, we estimate that the industry will introduce 50% fewer new products.

It may even be a story whose main characters are concepts:

> ➢ #Because the intellectual foundations of evolution are the same as so many other scientific theories, the falsification of the their foundations would be necessary for the replacement of evolutionary theory with creationism.

We can make theories play the roles of competing characters:

> ➢ In contrast to creationism, the theory of evolution shares its intellectual foundations with many other theories. As a result, creationism will displace evolutionary theory only when it can first prove that the foundations of all the other theories is false.

Consider the following passage:

> ➢ Though the governor knew that the cities needed new revenues to improve schools, he vetoed the budget bill because he wanted to encourage cities to increase local taxes.

The passage is relatively clear because the characters and verbs are clear.

Characters: Governor, cities, schools (legislature is in there but hidden).

Verbs for Governor: Governor *knew* something, he vetoed a bill, and he will encourage the cities

Verbs for cities: they *need* revenues, they [should] *improve* schools, and they [should] *increase* taxes;

Verbs for schools: they will be *improved*.

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The verbs are singularly important to why we think this sentence is reasonably clear. If we change the verbs to nouns

Know→knowledge

Encourage→encouragement

Improve→improvement

The other verbs take the same form

Need – the need

Veto – the veto

Increase – the increase

The version using nouns is less clear, as can be seen here:

> #Despite his knowledge of the need by cities for new revenues for the improvement of their schools, the Governor executed a veto of the budget bill to give encouragement to the cities for an increase of local taxes.

The meaning is the same but the story is not so easy to understand. Clarity is achieved when:

1. The subject names the characters

2. The verbs that go with the subjects name the crucial actions those characters are part of.

Consider the following passage:

> #Our lack of knowledge about local conditions precluded determination of committee action effectiveness in fund allocation to those areas in greatest need of assistance.

Who are the characters?

We (in the form of "Our") – Not a subject, but a modifier of "lack."

"the committee" – Not a subject, but another modifier in "action effectiveness"

"areas" – Not a subject, but an object of a preposition *to.*

The grammatical subject is the abstraction "Our lack of knowledge" followed by a vague verb "precluded."

Now look at this passage:

> ➤ Because we knew nothing about local conditions, we could not determine how effectively the committee had allocated funds to areas that most needed assistance.

Characters:

We – is also the subject

Committee – also the subject

Verbs – *knew* and *determine*, both for the subject *we.*

Verbs – *had allocated,* for the subject committee.

In the first example, the actions are not verbs, but are abstract nouns: lack, knowledge, determination, action, allocation, assistance, need. The second example consistently names those actions in verbs: we knew nothing, we could not determine, the committee allocated, areas needed.

The first example violates the first principle of naming the characters in subjects; it violates the second principle of expressing crucial actions in the verbs of the sentence. The real differences between the sentences is not their lengths, or the number of syllables or words, but in where the writer placed the characters and expressed their actions. When your prose seems turgid, abstract, too complex, first locate the cast of characters and the actions that those characters perform, and if you find that those characters are not subjects and their actions are not verbs, revise so that they are.

Even if we don't feel anything wrong with our own prose, others often do, so we ought to do something that will let us anticipate that judgment. A quick method is simply to run a line under the first five or six words of every sentence. If you find that (1) you have to go more than six or seven words into a sentence to get past the subject to the verb, and (2) the subject of the sentence is not one of your characters, take a hard look at that sentence; its characters and actions probably do not align with subjects and verbs. Then simply revise the sentence so that characters appear as subjects and their actions as verbs.

7.4.2.2   Stylistic Consequences

The two principles—characters as subjects and their actions as verbs—results in several welcome consequences:

1. In earlier Sections, you may be told to write more specifically, more concretely. Using nouns instead of verbs and deleting the characters fills the sentence with abstraction:

   ➤ #There has been an affirmative *decision* for program *termination*.

   When we use subjects to name characters and verbs to name their actions, we get sentences that are specific and concrete:

   ➤ The Director *decided* to *terminate* the program.

2. You may be told to avoid using too many prepositional phrases:

   An evaluation *of the* program *by us* will allow greater efficiency *in service to* clients.

   When we use verbs instead of abstract nouns, we can also eliminate most of the prepositional phrases. Compare:

   We will evaluate the program so that we can serve clients better (no prepositional phrases)

3. You may be told to put your ideas in a logical order. When we turn verbs into nouns and then string them through prepositional phrases, we can confuse the logical sequence of the actions. This series of actions distorts the real chronological sequence:

➢ #The closure of the branch and the transfer of its business and non-unionized employees constituted an unfair labor practice because the purpose of obtaining an economic benefit by means of discouraging unionization motivated the closure and transfer.

When we use subjects to name characters and verbs to name their actions, we are more likely to match our syntax to the logic of our story. Compare:

➢ The partners committed an unfair labor practice when they closed the branch and transferred its business and nonunionized employees in order to discourage unionization and thereby obtain an economic benefit.

4. You may have been told to use connectors to clarify logical relationships:

➢ #The more effective presentations of needs by other Agencies resulted in our failure in acquiring federal funds, despite intensive lobbying efforts on our part.

When you turn nouns into verbs, you have to use logical operators like *because, although,* and *if* to link the new sequences of clauses. Compare:

➢ **Although** we *lobbied* Congress intensively, we could not *acquire* federal funds **because** other interests *presented* their needs more effectively.

5. You may have been told to write short sentences.

In fact, there is nothing wrong with long sentences if their subjects and verbs match their characters and actions. But even so, when we match subjects and verbs with characters and actions, that tends to shorten the sentence. The last example is shorter by five words.

In short, observing this pair of principles produces other benefits. When you align subjects and characters, verbs and action, you turn abstract, impersonal, expository prose into a form that feels more like a narrative and uncovers the story behind the prose. Doing so does not mean turning the writing into choppy short sentences. Simplicity is sophisticated when structured well. A key towards achieving sophistication is to choose *which* characters among many to make the subject and which action to make the verb.

7.4.3 Subject and Characters

There are many kinds of characters. The most important are agents, the direct source of an action or condition. There are collective agents:

> ➢ Faculties of national eminence do not always teach well.

… secondary or remote agents:

> ➢ Mayor Daley built Chicago into a giant among cities.

… and in research writing especially we can find figurative agents that stand for the real agents:

> ➢ The White House announced today the President's schedule.
>
> ➢ The business sector is cooperating
>
> ➢ Many instances of malignant tumors fail to seek attention.

Often in research we use subjects to name things that are really the means, the instrument by which some unstated agent performs an action, making the instrument seem like the agent of that action:

> ➢ Studies of coal production reveal those figures.
>
> ➢ These new data establish the need for more detailed studies.
>
> ➢ This evidence corroborates our theory.

That is,

> ➢ When we study coal production, we find these figures.
>
> ➢ I have established through these new data that we must undertake more detailed studies.
>
> ➢ With this evidence I corroborate my theory.

Some characters do not appear in a sentence at all, so we need to supply them when revising.

> ➢ #In the last sentence of the Gettysburg Address there is a rallying cry for the continuation of the struggle.
>
> ➢ In the last sentence of the Gettysburg Address **Lincoln** rallied his audience to continue the struggle **against the South**.

In other sentences, the writer may imply a character in an adjective:

> ➢ #Determination of policy occurs at the presidential level.
>
> ➢ The President determines policy.

And in some cases, the characters and their actions are so far removed from the surface of the sentence that if we want to be explicit, we have to recast the sentence completely.

> ➢ #There seems to be no obvious reason that would account for the apparent unavailability of evidence relevant to the failure of this problem to yield to standard solutions.
>
> ➢ I do not know why my staff cannot find evidence related to this problem in ways we have previously solved.

Most often, characters in abstract prose modify one of those abstract nouns or are objects of prepositions such as *by, of, on the part of*:

> #The Federalists' **belief** that the **instability** *of* government was a consequence of popular democracy was based on their **belief** in the **tendency** *on the part of* factions to further their self-interest at the expense of the common good.

Compare:

> The Federalists **believed** that popular democracy **destabilized** government because they **believed** that factions **tended** to further their self-interest at the expense of the common good.

Often, we have to supply indefinite subjects because the sentence expresses a general statement:

> #Such multivariate strategies may be of more use in understanding the genetic factors which contribute to vulnerability to psychiatric disorders than strategies based on the assumption that the presence or absence of psychopathology is dependent on a major gene or than strategies in which a single biological variable is studied.

Compare:

> If we/one/researchers are to understand the genetic factors that make some patients vulnerable to psychiatric disorders, we/one/ researchers should use multivariate strategies rather than strategies in which wet one/ researchers study only a single biological variable.

The English language does not have convenient indefinite pronouns, so it's alright to use "we" to avoid slipping back into nominalizations or using passive verbs as highlighted in this example:

> #If the generic factors that make some patients vulnerable to psychiatric disorders **are to be understood**, multivariate strategies **should be used** rather than strategies in which **it**

is assumed that a major gene causes psychopathology or strategies in which only a single biological variable **is studied**.

7.4.4 Verbs and Actions

As we'll use the word here, "action" will cover not only physical movement, but also mental processes, feelings, relationships, literal or figurative. In these next four sentences, the meaning becomes clearer as the verbs become more specific:

#There *has been* effective staff information dissemination control on the part of the Secretary.

#The Secretary *has* **exercised** effective staff information dissemination control.

The Secretary has effectively **controlled** staff information dissemination.

The Secretary has effectively **controlled** how his staff **disseminates** information.

By analyzing these sentences, we can see that the crucial actions aren't *be* (the weak auxiliary verb) or exercise (equally weak verb that's inferred from the original sentence), but control and disseminate (the strong vigorous verbs in the sentence).

Most writers of turgid prose typically use a verb (state-of-being verbs) not to express action but merely to state that an action exists.

➢ #A need *exists* for greater candidate selection efficiency.

➢ We must *select* candidates more efficiently.

The action verb is "select" not "exists."

➢ #There *is* the possibility of prior approval of it.

➢ He may *approve* of it ahead of time.

➢ #We *conducted* an investigation of it.

> ➤ We *investigated* it.

In this last example, "conducted" carries little weight and is essentially empty.

> ➤ #A review *was done* of the regulations.

> ➤ They *reviewed* the regulations.

There is a technical term for a noun derived from a verb or an adjective. It is called a

nominalization. Nominalization is itself a noun derived from a verb, nominalize. Here are some

examples:

Verb → Nominalization	Adjective → Nominalization
discover discovery	careless carelessness
move movement	difficult difficulty
resist resistance	different difference
react reaction	elegant elegance
fail failure	applicable applicability
refuse refusal	intense intensity

Some nominalizations are identical to their corresponding verb:

hope → hope, charge→charge, result→result, answer→answer, repair → repair, return →

return.

These words when used in the verb form enhance the sentence

> ➤ #Our request is that on your *return*, you conduct a review of the data and provide an
>
> immediate *report*.

> ➤ We request that when you *return*, you review the data and *report* immediately.

7.4.4.1 Looking for Nominalizations

A few patterns of useless nominalizations are easy to spot and revise.

1. When the nominalization follows a verb, with little specific meaning, change the nominalization to a verb that can replace the empty verb.

> ➤ #The police *conducted* an **investigation** into the matter.
>
> ➤ The police **investigated** the matter.
>
> ➤ #The committee *has* no **expectation** that it will meet the deadline.
>
> ➤ The committee does not **expect** to meet the deadline.

2. When the nominalization follows *there is* or *there are*, change the nominalization to a verb and find a subject:

> ➤ #*There is* a need for further **study** of this program.
>
> ➤ The *engineering staff* must **study** this program further.
>
> ➤ #There *was* considerable **erosion** of the land from the floods.
>
> ➤ *The floods* considerably **eroded** the land.

3. When the nominalization is the subject of an empty verb, change the nominalization to a verb and find a new subject:

> ➤ #The **intention** of the IRS is to audit the records of the program.
>
> ➤ The IRS **intends** to audit the records of the program.
>
> ➤ #Our **discussion** concerned a tax cut.
>
> ➤ We **discussed** a tax cut.

4. When you find consecutive nominalizations, turn the first one into a verb. Then either leave the second or turn it into a verb in a phrase beginning with how or why:

> #There was first a **review** *of the* **evolution** *of the* dorsal fin.

> First, she **reviewed** the evolution of the dorsal fin.

> First, she **reviewed** how the dorsal fin evolved.

5. We have to revise more extensively when a nominalization in a subject is linked to a second nominalization in the predicate by a verb or phrase that logically connects them:

> #Their cessation of hostilities was because of their personal losses.

Subject: Their cessation of hostilities

Logical connection: was because of

Object: their personnel losses.

To revise such sentences,

(a) Change abstractions to verbs: cessation → cease, loss → lose.

(b) Find subjects for those verbs: *they* ceased, *they* lost.

(c) Link the new clauses with a word (conjunction, see Section 3 Developing Sentences for a complete review) that expresses their logical connection. That connection will typically be some kind of causal relationship:

To express simple cause: *because, since, when*

To express conditional cause: *if, provided that, so long as*

To contradict expected cause: *though, although, unless.*

Schematically, we do this:

Their cessation of hostilities → they ceased hostilities

was because of → because

their personnel loss → they lost personnel

More examples:

> ➤ #The **discovery** of a method for the **manufacture** of artificial skin will have the result of
>
> an increase in the **survival** of patients with radical burns.

-Researchers discover how to manufacture artificial skin

-More patients will survive radical burns

> ➤ If researchers can **discover** how to **manufacture** artificial skin, more patients will
>
> **survive** radical burns.

> ➤ #The presence of extensive rust **damage** to exterior surfaces prevented immediate
>
> **repairs** to the hull.

-Rust had extensively damaged the exterior surfaces

-We could not repair the hull immediately

> ➤ Because rust had extensively **damaged** the exterior surfaces, we could not **repair** the hull
>
> immediately.

> ➤ #The **instability** of the motor housing did not preclude the **completion** of the field trials.

-The motor housing was unstable

-The research staff completed field trials

> Even though the motor housing was **unstable**, the research staff **completed** the field trials.

7.4.4.2   Useful Nominalizations

In some cases, nominalizations are useful, even necessary.

Don't revise these.

1. The nominalization is a subject referring to a previous sentence:

> **These arguments** all depend on a single unproven claim.

> **This decision** can lead to costly consequences.

These nominalizations let us link sentences into a more cohesive flow.

2. The nominalization names what would be the object of its verb:

> I do not understand either **her meaning** or **his intention**.

This is a bit more compact than, "I do not understand either what she means or what he intends."

3. A succinct nominalization can replace an awkward "The fact that":

> #The fact that I denied what he accused me of impressed the jury.

> **My denial** of his accusations impressed the jury.

But then, why not

> When I denied his accusations, I impressed the jury.

4. Some nominalizations refer to an often repeated concept.

> Few issues have so divided Americans as **abortion on demand**.

> The Equal Rights Amendment was **an issue in past elections**.

> **Taxation** without **representation** was not the central concern of the American **Revolution**.

In these sentences, the nominalization names concepts that we refer to repeatedly: abortion on demand, Amendment, election, taxation, representation, Revolution. Rather than repeatedly spell out a familiar concept in a full clause, we contract it into a noun. In these cases, the abstractions often become virtual actors.

And, of course, some nominalizations refer to ideas that we can express only in nominalizations: freedom, death, love, hope, life, wisdom. If we couldn't turn some verbs or adjectives into nouns, we would find it difficult perhaps impossible to discuss those subjects that have preoccupied us for millennia. You simply have to develop an eye or an ear for the nominalization that expresses one of these ideas and the nominalization that hides a significant action:

> #There is a **demand** for an **end** to **taxation** on **entertainment**. (multiple successive nouns)

> We **demand** that the government stop **taxing** entertainment.

5. We often use a nominalization after there is/are to introduce a topic that we develop in subsequent sentences (as distinct from an isolated there is + nominalization):

There is no need, then, for argument about the existence, the inevitability, and the desirability of change [in language]. **There is** need, however, for **argument** about the **existence** of such a thing as good English and correct English. Let us not hesitate to assert that "The pencil was laying on the table" and "He don't know nothing" are at present incorrect no matter how many knows nothings say them: Let us insist that. Let us demand that . . . Let us do these things not

to satisfy rules" or to gratify the whims of a pedagogue, but rather to express ourselves clearly, precisely, logically, and directly.

-Theodore M. Bernstein, The Careful Writer

(Of course, we might also consider revising those first two sentences into "Language changes, and such changes are both inevitable and sometimes desirable. But there is such a thing as good

English and correct English.")

6. And sometimes our topic seems so abstract that we think we can write about it only in nominalizations. Here are two passages about an abstract principle of law. In the first, the abstract nominalization recovery in equity acts virtually as a character. It "requires," it "recovers," it "relaxes," just as a real character might.

> ➤ In comparison to the statutory method of recovery, there are certain advantages in the equitable right of recovery. **Recovery in equity** does not require strict compliance with statutory requirements. Because **equitable recovery** can be tailored to the particular controversy, it allows one to recover greater or lesser amounts. **A statutory action for the recovery of rents** can recover only the value of use and occupation exclusive of improvements to the property. **An equity action**, on the other hand, can recover rents based upon the value of the property with the defendant's improvements thereupon. **Proceedings in equity** also relax the evidentiary standard. Most importantly, unlike the statutory method, **recovery in equity** does not demand one year of possession prior to suit. **Both statutory and equitable remedies**, however, require the same standard of good faith.

But we can explain the same concepts using subject/characters and verb/actions.

> In comparison to the statutory method, a plaintiff will find certain advantages through an equitable right of recovery. In recovery in equity, **the plaintiff** need not strictly comply with statutory requirements. Because **he** can tailor recovery to the equities of the controversy, he may be able to recover greater or lesser amounts. In a statutory action regarding the recovery of rents, **a plaintiff** can recover only the value of use and occupation exclusive of improvements to the property. On the other hand, under recovery in equity, **the plaintiff** can recover rents based upon the value of the property with the defendant's improvements thereupon. In proceedings in equity, **the court** may also relax the evidentiary standard. Most importantly, unlike the statutory method, in recovery in equity **the plaintiff** does not have to possess the land one year prior to suit. In both statutory and equitable remedies, however, the court requires the same standard of good faith.

Other passages do not lend themselves to revision so easily (nominalizations are bolded and characters are italicized).

> #The **argument** is this. The cognitive component of **intention** exhibits a high degree of complexity. **Intention** is temporally divisible into two: prospective **intention** and immediate **intention**. The cognitive **function** of prospective **intention** is the representation of a *subject's* similar past **actions**, *his* current situation, and *his* course of future **actions**. That is, the cognitive component of prospective **intention** is a **plan**. The cognitive function of immediate **intention** is the **monitoring** and **guidance** of ongoing bodily **movement**. Taken together these cognitive **mechanisms** are highly complex. The folk psychological notion of **belief**, however, is an attitude that permits limited

> **complexity** of content. Thus the cognitive component of **intention** is something other
>
> than folk psychological **belief**. -Myles Brand, Intending and Acting

Translated into an agent-action style, this passage loses something of its generality, some would say its philosophical import. Only its author could judge whether our translation has misrepresented his argument.

> ➢ I argue like this: When an *actor* **intends** anything, *he* **behaves** in ways that are
>
> cognitively complex. *We* may **divide** these ways into two temporal modes: He **intends**
>
> prospectively or immediately. When an *actor* **intends** prospectively, *he* cognitively
>
> **represents** to himself what *he* has **done** similarly in the past, *his* current situation, and
>
> how he intends to **act** in the future. That is, when an *actor* **intends** prospectively, *he*
>
> **plans**. On the other hand, when an *actor* **plans** what *he* **intends** to do immediately, *he*
>
> **monitors** and **guides** his body as *he* **moves** it. When *we* **take** these two cognitive
>
> components together, *we* **see** that they are highly complex. But *our* beliefs about these
>
> matters on the basis of folk psychology are too simple. When *we* **consider** the cognitive
>
> component of intention in this way, *we* **see** that we have to think in ways other than folk
>
> psychology.

This passage illustrates the problem with finding an impersonal subject. Should we/one/the writer/you use as subjects we, one, he, philosophers, anyone? Some guides suggest the use of *she* in order to show gender equity.

7.4.4.3   Passives and Agents

In addition to avoiding abstract nominalizations, you can make your style more direct if you also avoid unnecessary passive verbs. In active sentences, the subject typically expresses the agent of an action, and the object expresses the goal or the thing changed by the action:

subject   object

Active: The partners → broke → the agreement.

                agent   goal

In passive sentences, the subject expresses the goal of an action; a form of *be* precedes a past participle form of the verb; and the agent of the action may or may not be expressed in a *by-phrase*:

                subject   be (past participle)   prepositional phrase

Passive: The ·agreement   ← was broken ←   by the partners.

                goal   agent

We can usually make our style more vigorous and direct if we avoid both nominalizations and unnecessary passive verbs.

Compare:

> ➤ #A new approach to toxic waste management detailed in a chemical industry plan will be submitted. A method of decomposing toxic by-products of refinery processes has been discovered by Genco Chemical.
>
> ➤ The chemical industry will **submit** a plan that details a new way to manage toxic waste. Genco Chemical has **discovered** a way to decompose toxic by-products of refinery processes.

Active sentences encourage us to name the specific agent of an action and avoid a few extra words--a form of *be* and, when we preserve the Agent of the action, the preposition *by*. Because the passive also reverses the direct order of agent-action-goal, passives eventually cripple the easy flow of an otherwise energetic style.

When we combine passives with nominalizations, we create that wretched prose we call legalese, sociologicalese, educationalese, bureaucratese all of the -eses of those who confuse authority and objectivity with polysyllabic abstraction and remote impersonality:

> ➤ #Patient movement to less restrictive methods of care may be followed by increased probability of recovery.
>
> ➤ If we treat patients less restrictively, they may recover faster.

But those are the easy generalizations. In many other cases, we may find that the passive is, in fact, the better choice.

7.4.4.4 Choosing between Active and Passive

To choose between the active and the passive, we have to answer two questions: First, must our audience know who is performing the action? Second, are we maintaining a logically consistent string of subjects? And third, if the string of subjects is consistent, is it the right string of subjects?

Often, we avoid stating who is responsible for an action, because we don't know or don't care, or because we'd just rather not say:

> ➤ Those who are found guilty of murder can be executed.
>
> ➤ Valuable records should always be kept in a fireproof safe.

In sentences like these, the passive is the natural and correct choice. In this next sentence, we might also predict the passive, but for a different reason, one having to do with avoiding responsibility:

Because the final safety inspection was neither performed nor monitored, the brake plate assembly mechanism was left incorrectly aligned, a fact that was known several months before it was decided to publicly reveal that information.

This kind of writing raises issues more significant than mere clarity.

The second consideration is more complex: it is whether the subjects in a sequence of sentences are consistent. Look again at the subjects in the pair of paragraphs about energy below.

> #*It* was found that *data* concerning energy resources **allocated** to the states were **not obtained**. *This action* is needed so that a *determination* of redirection **is permitted** on a timely basis when weather conditions change. A system must **be established** so that *data* on weather conditions and fuel consumption may **be gathered** on a regular basis.

> *We* found that the *Department of Energy* did not **obtain** data about energy resources that *Federal offices* were **allocating** to the states. *The Department* needs these data so that *it* can **determine** how to redirect these resources when conditions change. *The Secretary* of the Department must **establish** a system so that *his office* can **gather** data on weather conditions and fuel consumption on a regular basis.

In the first version, the subjects of the passive sentences seem to be chosen almost at random:

It … data … This action . . . a determination . . . A system … data . . .

In the second, the active sentences give the reader a consistent point of view; the writer "stages" the sentences from a consistent string of subjects, in this case the agents of the action:

We . . . Department of Energy . . . Federal offices . . . the Department . . . it . . . the Secretary . . . his office . . . .

Now each agent-subject anchors the reader in something familiar at the beginning of the sentence the cast of characters before the reader moves on to something new. If in a series of passive sentences, you find yourself shifting from one unrelated subject to another, try rewriting those sentences in the active voice. Use the beginning of your sentence to orient your reader to what follows. If in a series of sentences, you give your reader no consistent starting point, then that stretch of writing may well seem disjointed. If however, you can make your sequence of subjects appropriately consistent, then choose the passive.

In this next passage, the writer wanted to write about the end of World War II from the point of view of Germany and Japan. So in each of her sentences, she put Germany and Japan into the subject of a verb, regardless of whether the verb was active or passive:

> ➤ By March of 1945, the *Axis nations* had been essentially **defeated**; all that remained was a final, but bloody, climax. The *borders of Germany* had been **breached**, and *both Germany and Japan* were **being bombed** around the clock. Neither country, though, had been so devastated that it could not resist.

If, however, she had wanted to write about the end of the war from the point of view of the Allied nations, she would have chosen the active:

> ➤ By March of 1945, *the Allies* had essentially **defeated** the Axis nations; all that remained was a final, but bloody, climax. *American, French, and British forces* had **breached** the borders of Germany and were **bombing** both Germany and Japan around the clock. But *they* had not so thoroughly devastated either country as to destroy its ability to resist.

7.4.5 The Institutional Passive

When we try to revise passives in official and academic prose, we often run into a problem, because many editors and teachers believe that passages such as the following are stylistically improper (each comes from the opening of articles published in quite respectable journals):

> [Redacted] is concerned with two problems. How can we best handle in a transformational grammar (i) Restrictions . . . . To illustrate (i), we may cite . . . we shall show . . .

> Since the pituitary-adrenal axis is activated during the acute phase " response, we have investigated the potential role . . . Specifically, we have studied the effects of interleukin-1 . . .

> Any study of tensions presupposes some acquaintance with certain findings of child psychology. We may begin by inquiring whether . . . we should next proceed to investigate.

Here are the first few words from several consecutive sentences

in an article in Science, a journal of substantial prestige:

. . . we want . . . Survival gives . . . We examine . . . . We compare

. . . . We have used . . . . Each has been weighted . . . . We

merely take . . . . They are subject . . . . We use . . . . Efron and

Morris (3) describe . . . . We observed . . . . We might find . . . .

We know . . . .

Certainly, scholars in different fields write in different ways. And in all fields, some scholarly writers and editors resolutely avoid the first person everywhere. But if they claim that all good academic

writing in all fields must always be impersonally third person, always passive, they are wrong.

7.4.5.1   Metadiscourse: Writing about Writing

We now must explain, however, that when academic and scholarly writers do use the first person, they use it for particular purposes. Note the verbs in the passages cited: cite, show, begin by inquiring, compare. The writers are referring to their acts of writing or arguing, and are using what we shall call metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse is the language we use when, in writing about some subject matter, we incidentally refer to the act and to the context of writing about it. We use metadiscourse verbs to announce *that in what follows we will explain, show, argue, claim, deny, describe, suggest, contrast, add, expand, summarize*. We use metadiscourse to list the parts or steps in our presentation: *first, second, third, finally*; to express our logical connections: *infer, support, prove, illustrate, therefore, in conclusion, however, on the other hand*. We hedge how certain we are by writing *it seems that, perhaps, I believe, probably*, etc. Though metadiscourse does not refer to what we are primarily saying about our subject, we need some metadiscourse in everything we write. But too much metadiscourse results in weak indirect prose.

If scholarly writers use the first person at all, they predictably use *I* or *we* in introductions, where they announce their intentions in metadiscourse: *We claim that, We shall show, We begin by examining*. If writers use metadiscourse at the beginning of a piece, they often use it again at the end, when they review what they have done: *We have suggested, I have shown that, We have, however, not claimed*. Less often, scholarly writers use the first person to refer to their most general actions involved in researching their problem. This is not metadiscourse when it

applies to the acts of research: *we investigate, study, examine, compare, know, analyze, review, evaluate, assess, find, discover.* Academic and scientific writers rarely use the first person when they refer to particular actions. We are unlikely to find passages such as this:

> ➤ #To determine if monokines directly elicited an adrenal steroidogenic response, I added monocyte-conditioned medium and purified preparations of . . .

Far more likely is the original sentence:

> ➤ To determine if monokines directly elicited an adrenal steroidogenic response, monocyte-conditioned medium and purified preparations . . . were added to cultures . . .

Note that when the writer wrote this sentence in the passive, he unselfconsciously dangled his modifier: To determine . . . medium and purified preparations were added . . .(it is not clear if monokines was the one that added the "conditioned … preparations"). The implied subject of the verb *determine* is I or we; I determine. But that implied subject I or we differs from *medium and purified preparations,* the explicit subject of the main verb added. And thus dangles the modifier: the implied subject of the introductory phrase differs from the explicit subject of the clause.

Writers of scientific prose use this pattern so often that it has become standard usage in scientific English. The few editors who have stern views on these matters object, of course. But if they do, they must accept first-person subjects. If they both deprive their authors of a first-person subject and rule out dangling modifiers, they put their writers into a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you- don't predicament.

As a small historical footnote, we might add that this impersonal "scientific" style is a modern development. In his "New Theory of Light and Colors" (1672), Sir Isaac Newton wrote this rather charming account of an early experiment:

> ➤ I procured a triangular glass prism, to try therewith the celebrated phenomena of colors. And for that purpose, having darkened my laboratory, and made a small hole in my window shade, to let in a convenient quantity of the sun's light, I placed my prism at the entrance, that the light might be thereby refracted to the opposite wall. It was at first a very pleasing diversion to view the vivid and intense colors produced thereby.

7.4.5.2 Noun + Noun + Noun

Another habit of style that often keep us from making the connections between our ideas explicit is the unnecessarily long compound noun phrase:

Early childhood thought disorder misdiagnosis often occurs because of unfamiliarity with recent research literature describing such conditions. This paper reviews seven recent studies of particular relevance to **preteen hyperactivity diagnosis** and to **treatment modalities** involving **medication maintenance level evaluation procedures**.

Some grammarians insist that we should never use one noun to modify another, but that would rule out common phrases like **stone wall** or **student committee**. And if we ruled out such phrases, writers of technical prose would be unable to compact into a single phrase complex thoughts that they would otherwise have to repeat in longer constructions. If a writer must refer several times in an article to the idea behind **medication maintenance level evaluation procedures**, then repeating that phrase is marginally better than repeating **procedures to evaluate ways to maintain levels of medicatio**n. In less technical writing, though, compounds like these seem awkward or, worse, ambiguous, especially when they include nominalizations.

So, whenever you find in your writing a string of nouns that you have never read before and that you probably will not use again, try disassembling them. Start from the last and reverse their order, even linking them with prepositional phrases, if necessary. If one of the nouns is a

nominalization, change it into a verb. Here is the first compound in the example passage revised:

```
    1       2       3       4
```

early childhood thought disorder misdiagnosis

```
    4       3           2           1
```

misdiagnose disordered thought in early childhood

(Now we can see the ambiguity: what's early, the childhood, the disorder, or the diagnosis?) Then reassemble into a sentence:

> ➤ Physicians are misdiagnosing disordered thought in young children because they are not familiar with the literature on recent research.

7.4.6 Cohesion

In the previous section we've discussed how clarity enhance the quality of research. Clarity is usually seen at the sentence or local level. A series of clear sentences can still be confusing if we fail to design them to fit their context, to reflect a consistent point of view, to emphasize our most important ideas. These sentences could all refer to the same set of conditions, but each leads us to understand the conditions from a different point of view.

> ➤ Congress finally agreed with the Secretary of State that if we ally ourselves with Saudi Arabia and Iran then attacks Kuwait, we will have to protect Kuwait.

> ➤ The Secretary of State finally convinced Congress that if Kuwait comes under Iranian attack, it will need our protection if Saudi Arabia has acquired us as an ally.

> ➢ The Secretary of State and Congress finally agreed that if we and Saudi Arabia become allies and Kuwait and Iran enter into hostilities initiated by Iran, then we and Kuwait will become allies in the hostilities.

The problem is to discover how, without sacrificing local clarity, we can shape sentences to fit their context and to reflect those larger intentions that motivate us to write in the first place. Here are several principles for enhancing cohesion:

7.4.6.1 Start the sentence or passage with the familiar and end it with the newest or most significant information

Put at the beginning of a sentence those ideas that you have already mentioned, referred to, or implied, or concepts that you can reasonably assume your reader is already familiar with, and will readily recognize. Put at the end of your sentence the newest, the most surprising, the most significant information: information that you want to stress-perhaps the information that you will expand on in your next sentence. Each sentence should teach your reader something new. To lead your reader to whatever will seem new to that reader, you have to begin that sentence with something that you can reasonably assume that reader already knows. How you begin sentences, then, is crucial to how easily your readers will understand them, not individually, but as they constitute a whole passage. But in designing sentences in this way, you must have some sense of what your reader already knows about your subject.

Every time we begin a sentence, we have to juggle three or four elements that typically occur early on.

1. To connect a sentence to the preceding one, we use transitional words, such as *and, but, therefore, as a result*: And therefore …

2. To help readers evaluate what follows, we use expressions such as *fortunately, perhaps, allegedly, it is important to note*, *for the most part, under these circumstances, from a practical* point of view, politically speaking.

3. We locate action in time and place: *then, later, on May 23, in Europe. And therefore, it is important to note, that in the Northeastern states in recent years . . . .*

4. And most important (note the evaluation), we announce at the beginning of a sentence its topic the concept that we intend to say something about. We ordinarily name the topic of a sentence or clause in its subject:

As we juggle we might end up with a clumsy metadiscourse opening such as this:

> ➢   #And therefore, it is important to note, that from a practical point of view, in the Northeastern states in recent years, these sources of acid rain have been a matter of much concern . . . .

Your style will seem cohesive to the degree that you can subordinate the first three of the elements that open a sentence to the fourth, to its topic. If you begin sentences with the kind of throat-clearing introduction of the sentence above, your prose will seem not just uncertain, but unfocused. We will begin with topics, because they are centrally important in the ways readers read.

7.4.6.2   Topics are the Psychological Subjects

The topic of a sentence is its psychological subject. The psychological subject of a sentence is that idea we announce in the first few words of a sentence. It is almost always a noun phrase of some kind that the rest of the sentence characterizes, comments on, says something about. In most English sentences, psychological subjects (topics), are also grammatical subjects:

> ➤ Private higher education is seriously concerned about population trends through the end of the century.

The writer first announces the grammatical subject, Private higher education. As readers, we assume the writer is going to comment on, say something about that concept. In this sense, the sentence is "about" private higher education. But we can create a topic out of the object of a verb if we shift that object to the beginning of its sentence, before the subject:

> ➤ Population trends carries major implications on private higher education.

Here's another example:

> ➤ I cannot explain the reasons for this decision to end the treaty.
>
> ➤ The reasons for this decision to end the treaty, I cannot explain.

We can also put topics in introductory phrases

As for abortion, it is not clear how the Supreme Court will rule.

In regard to regulating religious cults, we must proceed cautiously.

Neither *abortion* nor *regulating religious cults* is the subject of its sentence. The main subject of the first is *it*, and of the second, *we*. If we ask what either of those sentences is really "about," we would not say that the sentences were "about" their grammatical subjects, *it or we*.

Those sentences are "about" their psychological subjects, their topics--*abortion*, and *regulating religious cults*. Here's the point. In the clearest writing, the topics of most sentences and clauses are their grammatical subjects. But what's more important than their grammatical function is the way topics control how readers read sentences, not individually, but in sequences, and the way that writers must therefore organize sequences of those topics. The most important concern of a writer, then, is not the individual topics of individual sentences, but the cumulative effect of the sequence of topics.

Topics are crucial for a reader because they focus the reader's attention on a particular idea toward the beginning of a clause and thereby notify a reader what a clause is "about." Topics thereby crucially determine whether the reader will feel a passage is coherent. Cumulatively, through a series of sentences, these topicalized ideas provide thematic signposts that focus the reader's attention on a well-defined set of connected ideas. If the sequence of topics seems coherent, that consistent sequence will move the reader through a paragraph from a cumulatively coherent point of view; but if through that paragraph topics shift randomly, then the reader has to begin each sentence out of context, from no coherent point of view. When that happens, the reader will feel dislocated, disoriented, out of focus. Whatever the writer announces as a topic, then, will fix the reader's point of view, not just toward the rest of the sentence, but toward whole sections.

This principle of a coherent topic string also helps us understand why we can be confused by one long sentence after another. Long sentences may not announce topics often enough or clearly enough to guide us through a multitude of ideas. We need topics as thematic signposts to help us assemble ideas in individual sentences and clauses into cohesive discourse.

This principle of using a consistent string of topics reinforces a point we made about characters and actions: When you design your sentences so that their subjects predictably name your central characters real or abstract and the verbs in those sentences name crucial actions, you are beginning your sentences from a point of view your readers will feel is consistent, from the point of view of your characters, the most familiar units of information in any story you tell. When that consistent topic string consists of your cast of characters as subjects, and you immediately connect those subjects with verbs that express the crucial actions, you are a long way toward writing prose that your readers will perceive as clear, direct, and cohesive.

7.4.6.3 Keeping Topics Visible

We can now appreciate why a writer has to get most of his or her sentences off to a brisk start with an appropriate topic. We fail to do this when we introduce sentences with too much metadiscourse, that language we use when we write about our own writing or thinking. These next sentences appeared in a study of a college curriculum. I have italicized the metadiscourse and bold-faced what I believe should have been the topics.

> ➢ #*We think it useful to provide some relatively detailed illustration of* the varied ways "corporate curricular personalities" organize themselves in programs. *We choose to feature as a central device in our presentation* what are called "introductory," "survey," or "foundational" courses. *It is important, however, to recognize the diversity of what occurs* in programs after the different initial survey courses. *But what is also suggested is that if one talks about* a program *simply in terms of* the intellectual strategies or techniques engaged in, *when these are understood in a general way*, it becomes difficult to distinguish many programs from others.

Get rid of the metadiscourse, make the central character—program—the topic, and we get a substantially more compelling claim:

> ➢ Our programs create varied "corporate" curricular personalities, particularly through their "introductory," "survey," or "foundational" courses. After these initial courses, they continue to offer diverse curricula. But in these curricula they seem to employ similar intellectual strategies.

At this point, some of you may be recalling advice that you once received about avoiding "monotony" vary how you begin your sentences, avoid beginning sentences with the same subjects. Bad advice. Your prose will become monotonous for reasons more serious than

repeated topics or subjects. It will be monotonous if you write one short sentence after another, or one long sentence after another. Your prose will seem monotonous if you stuff it with nominalizations and passives. You avoid monotony by saying what you have to say as clearly as you can, by so thoroughly engaging your readers in your ideas that they lose touch with the surface of your prose. Under any circumstances, because we ordinarily write "stories" with several different characters, we are unlikely to repeat the same words for the same characters at the beginning of several consecutive sentences. And even if we do, most readers will not notice.

7.4.6.4   Managing Subjects and Topics for Flow

English provides us with several ways to replace a long subject that expresses new information with a shorter segment that probably expresses information repeated from or referring to a previous sentence. Notice how, in each of the example sentences below, we move to the end a long subject that expresses new and therefore relatively more important information (italicized):

> ➤ #During the first years of our nation, *a series of brilliant and virtuous presidents committed to a democratic republic yet confident in their own superior worth* conducted its administration.

> ➤ During the first years of our nation, its administration was conducted by *a series of brilliant and virtuous presidents committed to a democratic republic yet confident in their own superior worth.*

Passives again. As we can see in the last example, an important role of the passive is to let us replace a long subject full of new information with a short one that locates the reader in the context of something more familiar:

> #*Astronomers, physicists, and a host of other researchers entirely familiar with the problems raised by quasar*s have confirmed these observations.

> These observations have been confirmed by *astronomers, physicists, and a host of other researchers entirely familiar with the problems raised by quasars.*

These sentences illustrate the main reason the passive exists in the language to improve cohesion and emphasis.

Subject-complement switching. Sometimes, we simply switch the subject and complement, especially when what follows the linking verb be refers to something already mentioned:

> #The source of the American attitude toward rural dialects *is more interesting [than something already mentioned]*.

> *More interesting [than something already mentioned]* is the source of the American attitude toward rural dialects.

We can make a similar switch with a few other verbs:

> #*The failure of the administration to halt the rising costs of hospital care* lies at the heart of the problem.

> At the heart of the problem lies *the failure of the administration to halt the rising costs of hospital care*.

> #*Some complex issues* run through these questions.

> Through these questions run *some complex issues*.

Subject-Clause Transformations. If you have a very long subject that does not allow you simply to switch it to the end of the clause, you can occasionally turn it into an introductory clause, allowing you to construct two shorter topics (subjects are boldfaced):

An attorney who uncovers after the close of a discovery proceeding documents that might be even peripherally relevant to a matter involved in the discovery proceeding must notify both the court and the opposing attorney immediately.

[If a discovery proceeding closes and an attorney then uncovers documents that might be even peripherally relevant to the matter of the proceeding,] he must notify both the court and the opposing attorney immediately.

Here is a quick way to determine how well you have managed your topics in a passage. Run a line under the first five or six words of every sentence (in fact under the subject of every verb in every clause, if you can do it). Read the phrases you underlined straight through. If any of them seems clearly outside the general set of topics, check whether it refers to ideas mentioned toward the end of the previous sentence. If not, consider revising.

Again, do not take this to mean that you have to make your topics identical or that all your topics have to be in subjects. A topic string is consistent to the degree that your reader can see connections in the sequence of words and phrases that open your sentences (and clauses). You will change your topic strings as you · begin a new section or a new paragraph. The crucial point is not to force your reader to begin each sentence in a sequence of sentences with information that the reader will find startling, unfamiliar, unexpected, disconnected from any of the other topics or from the end of the immediately preceding sentence.

7.4.6.5   Making the Audience the Topic

From time to time, some of us have to write for an audience able to understand only the simplest prose. Or more often, we have to write on a matter so complex that even a competent -

reader will understand it only if we take special care to make it clear. This does not mean "dumbing down." It means only that we take special care to apply everything that we have said so far an agent/action style, consistent topics, a predictable flow of old-new information.

But we can make our prose more immediate, more available to the reader, if in those sentences we can also make the reader the topic of a sequence of sentences.

Here is some advice on renting a house that appeared in a publication directed to a broad audience:

> ➤ The following information should be verified in every lease before signing: a full description of the premises to be rented and its exact location; the amount, frequency, and dates of payments; the amounts of deposits and prepayment of rents; a statement setting forth the conditions under which the deposit will be refunded.

That's not particularly difficult for an educated reader. But we can make it clearer, more reader-friendly, if you will, if we bring the reader into the flow of information in the form of you:

When you get the lease from the landlord, do not sign it right away. Before you sign, make sure the lease . . .

(1) describes the place that you are renting;

(2) states where it is;

(3) states

- how much rent you have to pay

- how often you have to pay it

- on what day you have to pay it;

(4) states

- how much security deposit you have to pay

- how much rent you have to pay before you move in;

(5) states when the landlord can keep your deposit.

This structure did more than shorten sentences, use simple words, and put agents into subjects, and actions into verbs. It also made the reader and the reader's experience a direct part of the discourse. It also used a tabular arrangement with lots of white space. Had it been longer, it could be broken up with headings and subheadings.

7.4.6.6   Designing and Choosing the Right Topics

A writer can create quite subtle effects by finding verbs that will let him shift into the subject/topic position those characters that will best serve his purposes.

Even four year olds understand the difference between:

> ➢ #When Tom and I bumped, my glass dropped, and the juice spilled.
>
> ➢ When I bumped into Tom I dropped my glass and spilled the juice.

Neither sentence is more or less "true" to the facts. But while both have an agent-action style, the second assigns responsibility to an agent in a way different from the first.

We best appreciate this design when we recognize how skilled writers draw on the resources of English syntax to achieve important ends. Here are the first few sentences of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, rewritten from a plausible and coherent topical point view, but rather different from Lincoln's original:

> ➢ Four score and seven years ago, this continent witnessed the birth of a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition of our fathers that all men are created equal. Now, this great Civil War that engages us is testing whether that nation or

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Compare the original:

> ➢ Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

Lincoln assigned responsibility to his audience. By consistently topicalizing *we* to make himself and his audience the agents of the crucial actions, Lincoln made them one with the founding fathers and with the men who fought and died at Gettysburg. By so doing, he tacitly invited his listeners to join their dead forefathers and their dead countrymen in making the great sacrifices the living had still to make to preserve the Union.

The earlier revision shifts agency away from people and assigns it to abstractions and places: the continent witnesses, a great civil war tests, the war creates, the ground will not let, it has taken. It have metaphorically invested agency and responsibility not in people but in abstractions. Had Lincoln presented my version, he would have relieved his audience of their responsibility to act, and would thereby have deprived us of one of the great documents in our history.

You may think at this point that it is always good to design prose so that agents always act on their own responsibility; that when we deflect responsibility away from people, when we

topicalize abstractions, we create prose that is less honest, less direct than prose whose agents act as topic/subjects. Not so. If in 1775 Thomas Jefferson had followed that advice, he would have written a very different Declaration of Independence. Note in the first two paragraphs of the original how Jefferson seems to have designed most of the sentences so that they do not open with the colonists acting as agents, asserting their own actions, but rather with words that topicalize mostly events, rights, duties, needs and concepts that make the colonists the objects of more actions than they initiate, concepts that force colonists to act on behalf of higher forces:

> ➢ When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.

Jefferson topicalized abstractions, subordinating the will of the revolutionaries to a higher force that acts on them. But after Jefferson established the principles that forced the colonists to act by animating and topicalizing a higher necessity, he switched his topic/subjects to King George, an agent whom Jefferson made seem to act entirely out of malign will:

> He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

Did Jefferson "intend" to create this systematic sequence of topics, subject/ agents, beginning with abstractions, moving to he, and concluding with we? We can no more answer that question than we can know what any great writer intends. But once a coherent pattern emerges, we have to treat that pattern as part of a design in the service of some larger end. The lesson to be drawn here (both politically and stylistically, perhaps) is that all local principles must yield to higher principles. The real problem is to recognize those occasions when we should subordinate one principle to another.

7.4.7 Emphasis

If at the beginning of your sentences, you consistently organize your subject/topics around a few central characters or concepts and then move quickly to close that subject with a precise verb expressing a crucial action, then by default you will have to put important new information at the ends of your sentences. If you do not manage the flow of your ideas in this way, your prose will seem not just unfocused, but weak, anticlimactic. Compare these two sentences:

> #A charge of gross violation of academic responsibility is required for a Board of Trustees to dismiss a tenured faculty member for cause, and an elaborate hearing

> procedure with a prior statement of charges is provided for before a tenured faculty member may be dismissed for cause, in most States.

> ➢ In most States, before a Board of Trustees may dismiss a tenured faculty member for cause, it must charge him with a gross violation of academic responsibility and provide him with a statement of charges and an elaborate hearing procedure.

The first trails off; the second builds a climactic rhythm. Because one element that opens a sentence is so important, we named it topic. Since the end of a sentence plays a role no r less crucial, we should give it a name as well. When you utter a sentence, your voice naturally rises and falls. When you approach the end, you ordinarily raise your pitch on one of those last few words and stress it a bit more strongly than you do the others. This rising pitch and stress signal the end of a sentence. We'll call that part of a sentence its stress.

7.4.7.1 Managing Endings

We manage the information in this stressed part of the sentence in several ways. We can put our most important information there in the first place. More often, we have to revise our sentences to give the right information the right emphasis.

Trim the end. In some cases, we can just lop off final unnecessary words until we get to the information we want to stress, leaving that information in the final stressed position.

> ➢ #Sociobiologists are making the provocative claim that our genes largely determine our social behavior in the way we act in situations we find around us every day.

> ➢ Since social behavior means the way we act, we can just drop everything after behavior: Sociobiologists are making the provocative claim that our genes largely determine our social behavior.

Shift less important information to the left. One way to revise for emphasis is to move unimportant phrases away from the end of a sentence to expose what you want to emphasize:

> ➤ #The data that are offered to establish the existence of ESP do not make believers of us *for the most part*.
>
> ➤ *For the most part*, the data that are offered to establish the existence of ESP do not make us believers.

Occasionally, when we shift a phrase, we may have to separate subjects from verbs or verbs from objects. This sentence ends weakly:

No one can explain why that first primeval superatom exploded and thereby created the universe in a few words.

The modifier of explain ("in a few words") is much shorter than the object of explain ("the clause why that first primeval superatom exploded and thereby created the universe"). To create better emphasis, we put that short, less important modifier before the longer, more important object, even if we have to split the object from its verb:

> ➤ No one can explain in a few words why that first primeval superatom exploded and thereby created the universe.

Shift important information to the right. Moving the important information to the end of a sentence is another way to manage the· flow of ideas. And the sentence you just read illustrates a missed opportunity. This is more cohesive and emphatic:

> ➤ Another way you can manage the flow of ideas is to move the most important information to the end of the sentence.

In fact, this is just the other side of something we've already seen how to move old information to the beginning of a sentence. Sentences that introduce a paragraph or a new section are

frequently of an X is Y form. One part, usually older information, glances back at what has gone before; the other announces something new. As we have seen, the older information should come first, the newer last. When it doesn't, we can often reverse the order of subjects and what follows the verb:

> ➤ #Those questions relating to the ideal system for providing instruction in home computers are just as confused.

> ➤ Just as confused are those questions relating to the ideal system for providing instruction in home computers.

Extract and isolate. When you put your most important ideas in the middle of a long sentence, the sentence will swallow them up. A way to recover the appropriate emphasis is to break the sentence in two, either just before or just after that important idea. Then revise the new sentences so that you guide your reader to the crucial information. That often means you have to isolate the point of a long sentence by putting it into a shorter sentence of its own.

> ➤ #Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA will promulgate new standards for the treatment of industrial wastewater prior to its discharge into sewers leading to publicly owned treatment plants, with pretreatment standards for types of industrial sources being discretionary, depending on local conditions, instead of imposing nationally uniform standards now required under the Act.

First, break up the sentence:

> ➤ Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA will promulgate new standards for the treatment of industrial wastewater prior to its discharge into sewers that lead to publicly owned

> treatment plants. Standards for types of industrial sources will be discretionary. They will depend on local conditions, instead of imposing the nationally uniform standards now required under the act.

Then rearrange to get the right emphasis:

> ➤ Under the Clean Water Act, the EPA will promulgate new standards for the treatment of industrial wastewater before it is discharged into sewers leading to publicly owned treatment plants. Unlike the standards now required under the act, the new standards will not be uniform across the whole nation. They instead will be discretionary, depending on local conditions.

The point here is the discretionary nature of the rules and their dependence on local conditions two ideas that the next sentences will probably expand on. So we express that point in its own sentence and put it at the end, in the stress position.

7.4.7.2   Some Syntactic Devices

There are a few grammatical patterns that add weight to the end of a sentence.

> ➤ **There**. I wrote the sentence above without realizing that I had illustrated this first pattern.

I could have written:

> ➤ A few grammatical patterns add weight to the end of a sentence.

If you begin too many sentences with "There is" or "There are," your prose will become flat-footed, lacking movement or energy. But you can open a sentence with *there* in order to push to the end of that sentence those ideas that the next sentences will build on. In other words, like the first sentence of this section, a there- sentence lets you introduce in its stress the topics for the following string of sentences. Again, you may remember someone telling you not to begin

sentences with there. More bad advice. Like passives, there- constructions have a function: to stress those ideas that you intend to develop in following sentences.

What. A what- sentence throws special emphasis on what follows a linking verb. Compare the emphasis of:

> This country needs a monetary policy that will end the violent fluctuations in money supply, unemployment, and inflation.

> **What** this country needs is a monetary policy that will end the violent fluctuations in money supply, unemployment, and inflation.

You have to pay for this added emphasis with a few more words, so use the pattern sparingly.

It- shift 1. By using it as a fill-in subject, you can shift a long introductory clause that would otherwise have been the subject to a position after the verb:

> That domestic oil prices must eventually rise to the level set by OPEC once seemed inevitable.

> **It** once seemed inevitable that domestic oil prices must eventually rise to the level set by OPEC.

It- shift 2. With this pattern, you simultaneously select and emphasize a topic and throw added weight on the stress. Compare:

> In 1933 this country experienced a depression that almost wrecked our democratic system of government.

> It was in 1933 that this country experienced a depression that almost wrecked our democratic system of government.

Because all these syntactic patterns are so self-conscious, and because a few of them actually obscure topics, use them sparingly.

When All Else Fails If you find yourself stuck with a sentence that ends flatly because you have to repeat a phrase you used in a previous sentence, at least try changing the phrase to a pronoun:

When the rate of inflation dropped in 1983, large numbers of investors fled the bond market and invested in stocks. However, those particularly interested in the high tech market often did not carefully investigate the stocks.

When the rate of inflation dropped in 1983, large numbers of investors fled the bond market and invested in stocks. However, those particularly interested in the high tech market often did not carefully investigate **them**.

By substituting the pronoun for the lightly stressed repeated, word, you throw the emphasis on the word before the pronoun. Finally, avoid ending a sentence with meta discourse. Nothing ends a sentence more anticlimactically, as we see:

#The opportunities we offer are particularly rich at the graduate level, it must be remembered.

The opportunities we offer are, it must be remembered, particularly rich at the graduate level.

7.4.7.3 Nuances of Emphasis

When we write highly technical prose, we often write to an audience that understands as well as we do or better the complex terminology, the background, the habits of mind that workers in that field have to control. When we do, we don't have to explain technical terms as we would to a layperson. But the problem in writing for a non-expert audience is more complex than merely defining strange terms. If for a non-expert audience we use terms like sarcomere, tropomyosin, and myoplasm, we would not only have to define them; we would also have to take care to locate those words at that point where my reader is most ready to receive them at the end of a

sentence. In these next two passages, as the following question: Where in the two passages do the technical terms typically occur? How does that difference affect how easily you can read the two versions? What other devices did I use to revise the first into the second? One sentence in the second still has all the characteristics of prose written for an insider: which one?

> ➤ An understanding of the activation of muscle groups depends on an appreciation of the effects of calcium blockers. The proteins actin, myosin, tropomyosin, and troponin make up the sarcomere, the basic unit of muscle contraction. Its thick filament is composed of myosin, which is an ATPase or energy-producing protein. Actin, tropomyosin, and troponin make up its thin filament. There is a close association between the regulatory proteins, tropomyosin and troponin, and the contractile protein, actin, in the thin filament. The interaction of actin and myosin is controlled by tropomyosin. Troponin I, which participates in the interaction between actin and myosin; troponin T, which binds troponin to tropomyosin; and troponin C, which binds calcium constitute three peptide chains of troponin. An excess of 10-7 for the myoplasmic concentration of Ca++ leads to its binding to troponin C. The inhibitory forces of tropomyosin are removed, and the complex interaction of actin and myosin is manifested as contraction.

Compare with this revision:

> ➤ To contract, muscles use calcium. When we understand what calcium does, we understand how muscles are affected by calcium blocker drugs. The fundamental unit of muscle contraction is the sarcomere. The sarcomere has two filaments, one thin and one thick. These filaments are composed of proteins that cause and prevent contraction. Two of these proteins cause a muscle to contract. One is in the thin filament-the protein actin. The other protein is in the thick filament-myosin, an energy producing or ATPase

protein. When actin in the thin filament interacts with myosin in the thick filament, the muscle contracts. The thin filament also has proteins that inhibit contraction. They are the proteins troponin and tropomyosin. Troponin has three peptide chains: troponin I, troponin T, and troponin C. (a) troponin I participates in the interaction between actin and myosin; (b) troponin T binds troponin to tropomyosin; (c) troponin C binds calcium. When a muscle is relaxed, tropomyosin in the thin filament inhibits actin, also in the thin filament, from interacting with the myosin in the thick filament. But when the concentration of $Ca++$ in the myoplasm in the sarcomere exceeds 10^7, the calcium binds to troponin C. The tropomyosin then no longer inhibits actin and myosin from interacting and the muscle contracts.

For the novice in muscle chemistry, the second version is more readable than the first. Yet both have the same technical terms. In fact, the second has no more information than the first. The versions differ, however, in two ways. In the second, some of the information are made explicit that the first only implied the sarcomere has thick and thin filaments or information that was indirectly stated in an adjective converting regulatory protein into proteins that regulate. 2. In the second, technical terms are introduced at the ends of their sentences.

Here is another key to communicating complex information that requires terminology unfamiliar to your readers: when you introduce a technical term for the first time or even a familiar but very important term design the sentence it appears in so that you can locate that term at the end, in its stress, never at the beginning, in its topic, even if you have to invent a sentence simply for the sake of defining or emphasizing that term. Writers often introduce terms in this same way even in highly technical writing for a relatively specialized audience.

7.4.8 Coherence

Cohesion is achieved by fitting the sentences to their context and sequencing the ideas into a consistent string of topics. This is done by beginning with what the reader is familiar with, adding new information with every sentence and ending with the newest and most interesting idea. Coherence is about extending the consistency to larger sections of the document and even the whole document, weaving a consistent theme throughout. When words are conceptually related in the document, it is coherent. Read through the following paragraph paying attention to the stylized words:

> ➢ Clark's PRACTICE OF CAREFULLY MAPPING every {fossil} made it possible to FOLLOW the evolutionary **development** of various types through *time*. Beautiful sequences of {antelopes, giraffes and elephants} were OBTAINED; {*new* species} **evolving** out of old and **appearing** in *younger* strata. In short, evolution was taking place before the eyes of the Omo surveyors, and they could *time* it. The finest examples of the process were in several {lines of pigs} which **had been common** at Omo and had **developed** rapidly. UNSNARLING the {Pig} story WAS TURNED OVER to paleontologist Basil Cooke. He PRODUCED family trees for {pigs} whose {various types} WERE SO ACCURATELY DATED that {pigs} themselves became measuring sticks that COULD BE APPLIED to {fossils} of questionable *age* in other places that had {similar pigs}.

The first set of stylized words is the set of words in capitals—representing the actions or verbs of the surveyors—map, follow, obtain, unsnarl, turn, produce, date, apply. The second set is the set of boldfaced words—representing the main actions or verbs related to evolution—develop, evolve, appear, exist (had). These verbs are performed by the objects being studied, the characters of species or types of fossils, stylized in represented in curly brackets—fossil,

antelopes, giraffes, pigs. The last set in italics represent the various words related to time—time, new, old, younger, age. All of these words are woven into the paragraph creating a coherent story for the reader.

Note that these sequences of words are not just repeated words. They are sets of conceptually related words. We will call these sets of conceptually related words *themes* and sequences of them that run through a paragraph *thematic strings*. In any paragraph, the words in the topic strings and the words in thematic strings are not mutually exclusive. Some words in a topic string may turn up outside the topic position, and some words in the thematic string may turn up as topics. Together, topic strings and thematic strings constitute the conceptual architecture of a passage, the frame within which you develop new ideas. Topic strings focus your reader's attention on what a passage is globally about. The thematic strings give your reader a sense that you are focusing on a core of ideas related to those topics.

Read this paragraph:

> ➤ #Truman had many issues to factor into his decision about the Oppenheimer committee's scientific recommendation to stop the hydrogen bomb project. A Sino-Soviet bloc had been proclaimed; the Cold War was developing; Republican leaders were withdrawing support for his foreign policy; and opinion was coming down on the side of a strong response to the first Russian atom bomb test. As a Democratic President, Truman concluded that being second in developing the hydrogen bomb was an alternative he could not risk. In retrospect, some now believe that the risk was worth taking, but they did not have to consider the issues that Truman did.

We know it's about Truman the atomic bomb (or is it about the hydrogen bomb?). But there is no consistent theme woven into the paragraph. Now read this revised version:

> ➢ When the Oppenheimer committee advised President Truman to stop the hydrogen bomb project, Truman had to consider not just scientific issues, but also how **developing tensions** between the U.S. and the USSR were influencing *domestic politics*. When the Russians and Chinese proclaimed a **hostile Sino-Soviet bloc**, the **Cold War** became a *political issue*. At the same time, Truman was losing *Republican support* for his foreign policy. So when **Russia set off its first atomic bomb**, Americans demanded that their **President respond** strongly. He decided that he could not risk *voters' seeing him* as letting the Russians be first in developing the most powerful weapon yet. Some critics now believe that he should have taken that risk, but they did not have to worry about *Cold War American politics*.

We have done more than make this paragraph more specific. We have revised it around explicit thematic words that focus the reader's attention on two central themes:

First on developing tensions between the U.S. and the USSR—developing tensions (announced in the first sentence), a hostile Sino-Soviet bloc, the Cold War;

Then on domestic politics--domestic politics (also announced at the end of the first sentence), political issue, Republican support, voters seeing him, Cold War American politics.

But now here is a complicating factor: readers familiar with the history of that period would not have needed those words to make the original paragraph hang together: they would have supplied their own, as some of you may have done. Those who know a great deal about a subject can create much of their own cohesion and coherence in a text on that subject because they can read into it relationships that others less knowledgeable cannot. Those who know little need all the help they can get. The problem is to understand what your reader knows about your subject. Since we ordinarily write for readers who know much less than we do about a subject, it is always prudent to underestimate a reader's knowledge and make themes explicit.

7.4.8.1 How Do Thematic Strings Go Wrong?

Too Few Strings. A paragraph that feels empty of meaning will have one or two topics, much repetition, and no specifically articulated central themes that the reader can seize on as a conceptual center for the paragraph. But once diagnosed, this problem won't yield to advice about style and organization. The writer has to think harder.

Diffuse Strings. A reader may feel a passage is unfocused if a theme is only implicit or if the writer uses no single word to pull together concepts that may seem to a reader wholly unrelated. That was the problem with the original Truman paragraph. A different form of that problem is illustrated by this next paragraph:

> ➢ Rule structuring supports cognition, whether the information comes from *direct practice*, *witnessed demonstrations*, or from **symbolic modeling**. Under what conditions is one social learning technique favored over another? *Example* can teach better than **precept**. This is most likely to be the case if the learners' language skills are not adequate for utilizing information cast in language symbols, or if the patterns cannot be easily captured in words. In many cases, such as in learning to ride a bicycle, **verbal directions** may be too cumbersome, since quick and intricate coordinations must be made. In mastering certain concepts, diverse subroutines must be integrated serially. If the content is difficult and unfamiliar, **lengthy lecture presentations** can tax comprehension and satiate the discerning attention of the learner. In these cases, *demonstration* offers advantages over **undiluted narration**. However, if **verbal symbols** can be easily stored and adeptly translated into their action referents, **symbolic modeling** should be much more efficient than enacting *actual illustration* for observers.

The writer of this paragraph wanted to contrast two kinds of teaching: explanation and demonstration. But he used so many different terms to describe them that he seems to describe

a dozen ways. He expressed the theme of explanation (boldfaced) by **symbolic modeling, precept, language symbols, words, narrative modeling, instructions, lecture presentations, undiluted narration, and verbal symbols** (interestingly, never the word explanation). He expressed the theme of demonstration (italicized) by *demonstration, example, exemplification, and actual illustration* fourteen different words and phrases for just two concepts.

We have revised this passage to focus it more explicitly (1) on a consistent topic string, organized around the characters we and teachers, and (2) on a few consistent thematic strings: learn, actions, rules, demonstration, and explanation.

> ➤ We learn rules for actions better when those rules are structured, whether we learn by practicing them, by watching a teacher demonstrate them, or by listening to a teacher explain them. But do we learn better from a demonstration or from an explanation? We are likely to learn more when we watch a demonstration if our language skills are so weak that we cannot understand words easily, or if the teacher cannot verbalize the rules. We are also likely to learn more from watching a demonstration when we must quickly coordinate intricate actions such as learning to ride a bicycle, but the explanation for them is too cumbersome. We may also learn more quickly from a demonstration if the action requires us to serially integrate diverse subroutines. Finally, we may learn better from a demonstration if the information is difficult or unfamiliar and the teacher lectures about it at length. In these cases, we may become satiated and not be able to pay attention. On the other hand, we will learn an action better from an explanation if we can adeptly translate explanations into actions and then store the information.

It may be that the writer of the original paragraph was remembering that familiar advice, "Vary your word choice." More bad advice. Don't strive for "elegant variation." When you use two

words for one concept, you risk making your reader think you mean two concepts. If a paragraph or passage does not seem to hang together, if it feels vague, out of focus, look at its topic and thematic strings. Its topic strings should be consistent and appropriate. Its thematic strings should be articulated clearly and concisely. There is, however, one more principle that we must observe when we introduce new topic and thematic strings.

7.4.8.2   How Do New Strings Start? Signaling Topics and Themes

Signaling and signposting are covered in earlier Sections. A reader will feel that a paragraph is coherent if he is introduced to new topic and thematic strings in a predictable location: at the end of the sentence(s) that constitute the opening section of a paragraph, section, or whole document. Even when your paragraphs do have specific topics and thematic strings, your readers may overlook them if you do not signal them clearly. Consider this paragraph:

> ➢ Seven out of eight reigns of the Romanov line after Peter the Great were plagued by some sort of palace revolt or popular revolution. In 1722, Peter the Great passed a law of succession that terminated the principle of heredity. He proclaimed that the sovereign could appoint a successor in order to accompany his idea of achievement by merit. This resulted in many tsars not appointing a successor before dying. Even Peter the Great failed to choose someone before he died. Ivan VI was appointed by Czarina Anna, but was only two months old at his coronation in 1740. Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great, defeated Anna, and she ascended to the throne in 1741. Succession not dependent upon authority resulted in boyars' regularly disputing who was to become sovereign. It was not until 1797 that Paul I codified the law of succession: male primogeniture. But Paul I was strangled by conspirators, one of whom was probably his son, Alexander I.

To most readers, this paragraph seems unfocused, but its problem does not turn on missing topic or thematic strings. The paragraph consistently has characters as subject/topics, and it

has three clearly stated and important thematic strings: words related to the concepts of succession, appointment, and a general theme that we might express as turmoil. This paragraph seems confused because in its opening sentence, its author set us up to expect one set of themes, but he delivered another. He wrote:

> ➤ Seven out of eight reigns of the Romanov line after Peter the Great were plagued by some sort of palace revolt or popular revolution.

But he drops the theme of revolt and revolution and writes:

> ➤ In 1722, Peter the Great passed a law of succession that terminated the principle of heredity.

The theme of revolt and revolution is not addressed until the last part of the paragraph, and does not explicitly articulate that theme even then. The principle of design is this: we introduce new themes not anywhere in a sentence, but rather as close to its end as we can manage, the stress position. We use that concluding stress position not only to emphasize important words that we think are important in that single sentence, but to signal that we intend to develop new themes in the sentences that follow.

To revise the opening sentence of the Romanov paragraph, we would pick out the themes that in fact are important in the rest of the paragraph and then design an opening sentence that would introduce them in its stress:

> ➤ After Peter the Great died, seven out of eight reigns of the Romanov line were plagued by turmoil over disputed succession to the throne.

7.4.8.3   Complex Introductions

In all the preceding examples we have seen writers introduce paragraphs with a single sentence, typically called a "topic sentence." Why not just use that familiar term? One reason is

that good writers often introduce paragraphs with more than just a single sentence. In the next paragraph, where does the writer seem to finish setting up her problem, to finish introducing her central issue before she begins to discuss it?

> ➤ At the outset this sum may not appear to be particularly onerous. However, the troublesome provision for violating the county ordinance against dumping toxic wastes is not the $500 fine, but the more serious mandatory penalty of "six months in county jail." Even though no jail sentences have been rendered against Abco so far, the fact that the violations are criminal in nature causes serious concern. Because the criminal aspects of these violations combine with the growing mistrust toward large, international corporations and with California's emphasis on consumerism, juries are likely to be hostile toward such actions. It is therefore appropriate that we re-evaluate the way these alleged violations are dealt with.

Most readers feel that the introduction consists of the first two sentences:

> ➤ At the outset this sum may not appear to be particularly onerous. However, the troublesome provision for violating the county ordinance against dumping toxic wastes is not the $500 fine, but the more serious mandatory penalty of "six months in county jail."

It is at the end of the second sentence that the writer introduces the topic string consisting of jail sentences, violations, criminal aspects of these violations, and a central thematic string consisting of onerous, troublesome, serious, penalty, mistrust, and hostile.

In short, we can introduce new topic strings and thematic strings in a single sentence. But just as often, we create introductions consisting of two or three sentences, or (though rarely) more. To be certain that our readers do not overlook the imp9rtance of those new topic and thematic

strings, we put them into the stress of the last sentence of the introduction. These complex introductions are so common that it would be misleading to talk about "topic sentences."

Regardless of how many sentences we use to introduce the body of a paragraph (or a document or one of its sections), we t have to grasp this central principle: Paragraph = Issue + Discussion.

Whether readers are conscious of it or not, they try to divide units of organized discourse paragraphs, sections, or wholes into two sections:

1. A short opening segment. Toward the end of this segment, in the stress position of the last sentence, readers look for the concepts the writer will discuss in the following section. Those words are often topics, but they must also include themes.

2. A longer following segment-the rest of the paragraph. In this segment, the writer develops, and readers look for, new ideas against a background of repeated topics and themes.

We will call this opening segment the *issue*, and what follows it the *discussion*. The issue of a paragraph is not its ideas, its concepts, or its subject. The issue of a paragraph, of a section, or of a document is its introductory segment, its overture, if you will. The discussion typically explains, elaborates, supports, qualifies, argues for what the writer stated in the issue. The issue promises; the discussion delivers. The issue of a paragraph may be one, two, three, or more sentences long; the issue of a section or short essay one, two, or three or more paragraphs; the issue of a long report a few pages long. But however long it is, the issue of a paragraph, section, or whole document should be short, much shorter than what it introduces. If a writer creates a disproportionately long issue, the reader may incorrectly assume that after a sentence or two, the writer has finished her introduction and is into the body of her paragraph, when in fact she is still introducing it. In longer documents, because readers risk missing where

the issue stops and the discussion begins, many writers signal the end of the issue and the beginning of the discussion with a heading.

Issue is analogous to *subject* and *topic*. These three terms name introductory positions that all have the same function: to put before the reader concepts or claims that the writer intends to expand on in what follows. In the same way, the term *discussion* is analogous to *verb* and *stress*. They name the positions that follow: subject + verb, topic + stress, issue + discussion. And these positions all have the same function of expanding on what precedes them.

7.4.8.4   Diagnosis and Revision

When a paragraph feels out of focus, confused, you may have one or more of four problems with its issue and discussion.

1. At the end of the issue, you introduce a concept that readers take to begin a theme, but you then fail to develop that concept in the discussion.

2. Conversely, you fail to anticipate in the issue important themes that you in fact develop in the discussion.

3. At the end of the issue you introduce a concept that readers think promises a theme, but in the discussion, you develop that concept using terms so varied that readers cannot connect them to your announced theme.

4. You mention in the issue those themes that you develop in the discussion, but you bury the references to them inside a sentence, instead of highlighting them in the stress of the final sentence of the issue. In short, if you write a passage that does not seem to hang together, seems decentered or out of focus, you may have made a promise but didn't deliver, or you may have delivered on promises you didn't make.

7.4.8.5 What (and Where's) the Point?

A reader will feel that a paragraph is coherent if she can read a sentence that specifically articulates its point. When we move from one paragraph or section to another, we also imply that we intend to make some new point, to make some new claim about that new subject matter. Readers will expect to find in each paragraph and section, and also in the whole, a sentence that will be the logical, argumentative, expository center, a sentence that you could send as the telegram capturing your central idea. The most common problem that writers have with points is that they fail to articulate them clearly, and so the reader doesn't get the point of a paragraph, of a section, or of the whole document. Or worse, the reader gets the wrong one.

By POINT we do not mean a general intention in the mind of the writer or the gist or summary of a passage. By POINT we mean the specific sentence on the page that the writer would send as a telegram if asked "What's your point?" In fact, the better question is not "What's your point," but " Where's your POINT?"

A reader will feel that a paragraph is coherent if he finds the POINT sentence in one of two predictable places in a paragraph: (1) at the end of its issue, or (2) at the end of its discussion; i.e., at the end of the paragraph (or section or whole document). Consider this paragraph:

Though most economists believe that business decisions are guided by a simple law of maximum profits, in fact they result from a vector of influences acting from many directions. When an advertiser selects a particular layout, for example, he depends not only on sales expectations or possible profit but also on what the present fad is. He is concerned with what colleagues and competitors will think, beliefs about the actions of the FTC, concerns about Catholics or the American Legion, whether Chicanos or Italian-Americans will be offended, how the "silent majority" will react. He might even be worried about whether the wife or secretary of the decision maker will approve.

Where is the POINT? The answer seems straightforward--the first sentence, because it sums up the paragraph by expressing its most significant statement, the claim that the writer wants the reader to accept. The other sentences support that claim. The first sentence, then, is the POINT of this paragraph. That single POINT sentence simultaneously constitutes the entire issue of the paragraph.

In this next three-sentence *issue,* sentences (1-2) constitute a generalization that is narrowed in POINT sentence (3):

(1) Writing well involves so many skills that it is hard to know where to begin describing what makes a good writer. (2) Among other considerations, a writer must be sensitive to words, style, organization, subject matter, logic, emotion, audience. (3) Perhaps the most crucial of these, though, is a sensibility to one's audience, to how readers read.

We can also put a POINT at the end of a paragraph, at the end of the *discussion*, and still seem entirely coherent. Why put a POINT sentence last in a paragraph? Usually, the writer wants to develop her argument before making her claim. Sometimes she discovers it there (more about this in a moment). But predictably, a writer will put her POINT sentence at the end of the paragraph because she intends to develop, expand, elaborate, explore that POINT in the following series of paragraphs. In fact, if the writer uses the paragraph to introduce a whole document, then she will predictably locate her POINT at the end of that paragraph. Here is a paragraph whose POINT is at the end:

> ➤ Something has happened to the American male's need to display the signs of stereotypical masculinity that once seemed necessary for survival on the frontier. For a long time, American males were confident in their manhood, sure of their sexual roles and images. Indeed, the rugged frontiersmen never even thought about their masculinity; they were simply men surviving in a dangerous world and dressing the part. Then in the nineteenth

century, our ideal male became the cowboy, then the world adventurer, then the war hero. They all were confident of themselves and unselfconsciously dressed their part. But in this century, something happened: Hemingway's heroes, for example, seemed to feel that they had to prove that it was still important to be a man among men, and our image of them is one of a kind of Brooks Brothers ruggedness. They seemed less confident that their masculinity had a real function. Now one can detect a new theme: as the male image as conqueror and survivor has lost its value, men have felt free to dress in ways once thought feminine, to wear earrings, even to wear makeup. These signs of a change in the American male's sexual image of himself suggests something deeper than changes in appearance: *he is adapting to a world in which the image of traditional masculinity is no longer necessary for survival.*

In general, however, most readers in most nonacademic situations don't like that kind of organization. They want to see the POINT up front. So unless you can justify creating a POINT-last document (see below for some reasons), don't do it. But if you must, then you should observe two more principles of construction. At the end of the introductory issue of your document, you must:

1. offer some kind of specific anticipatory POINT sentence(s) that clearly promise a main POINT still to come; and

2. include toward the end of that anticipatory POINT sentence the themes and topics that you will pursue. Whether you make your POINT early or late, you must always frame the space that your reader is about to enter.

7.4.8.6   Reasons for placing the POINT Last

Timidity or Politeness. Professionals believe that if a document delivers bad news, they should withhold the main POINT until the end. The theory is that if the writer can gently walk her readers through her reasoning toward the unwelcome POINT, the reader will be more willing to accept it.

Discovery. Sometimes writers put their main POINT sentences last because they want their readers to work through an argument or a body of data to experience a sense of discovery. They believe that the development of the POINT is as important as the POINT itself. Articles in many sciences hard or soft begin with abstracts that typically contain the POINT of the article. Readers in those areas also know that, after reading the abstract, they can go directly to the conclusion if they want to see the main POINT expressed in more detail. These readers employ a reading strategy that creates a POINT-first form: if they don't find the POINT on the first page, they flip to the conclusion, where they expect to find it.

Convention. Writers put a main POINT last when local convention encourages it, typically in the belletristic essay. In some fields outside the sciences, it is typical for a writer first to announce (some would say invent) a problem that no one suspected until the writer pointed it out.

7.4.8.7   Using Headings to Inhere Coherency

Headings are a familiar feature in professional writing. We usually think of them as most helpful to readers, because they give readers a general idea about the content of the section they head. They also show readers where one section stops and another starts and indicate levels of subordination. But if headings are useful to readers, they are more useful to writers, because writers can use them to diagnose potential problems with the perceived structure of a document.

The Location of Headings

1. Locate in your document where you would insert a heading to signal the end of your issue and the beginning of your discussion. At this point, don't worry about what should go into the heading; just locate where it should be.

2. In the body of the discussion, locate places where you would insert at least one more equivalent level of headings.

3. Repeat for each section until you have a heading at least every three or four pages. How many places you find will depend on how long your document is. A ten-page document might have only two or three headings in the discussion. A longer one will have more.

Now, if you could not quickly and confidently find those places where you would insert headings, you have a problem: you don't know where the major junctures are in your own document. If you can't identify them, neither will your readers.

7.4.8.8   The Content of Headings

Once you have located where headings should go, you can decide on their specific words. The words in a heading should state the new and central topics and themes of each section. To determine what those topics and themes should be, simply look at the ends of your *issues*, at the stress of your POINTS. If you do that and you still don't know what should be the words in your headings, you have a problem, because if you cannot identify your own key concepts, neither will your readers.

Finally, consider the highest heading of all: your title. What should go into a useful title is straightforward: the key topics and themes that appear in the stress of your main POINT sentence.

Two-part titles are fashionable--*Computer Assisted Instruction: Advantages and Disadvantages*, but they are also useful. If you don't get the key themes and topics in the first part, you might get them in the second. Not all readers like headings; some feel they give a crude vocational look to

writing, that good readers don't need them. Whatever your feelings, you ought not to underestimate how useful they are as a way to anticipate how your readers are likely to respond to the form of your paper. If you are not certain where to locate headings, if you are not certain what words to put into those headings, you can be certain that your readers will find your document confusing.

7.4.9 Concision

Once you can use the structure of a sentence and a paragraph to organize your ideas, you're a long way toward a clear and direct style. But some sentences and paragraphs enjoy all the virtues of grammatical clarity yet remain wordy and graceless. Even when you arrange their parts in all the right ways, they can still succumb to acute prolixity:

> ➤ #The point I want to make here is that we can see that American policy in regard to foreign countries as the State Department in Washington and the White House have put it together and made it public to the world has given material and moral support to too many foreign factions in other countries that have controlled power and have then had to give up the power to other factions that have defeated them.

That is:

> ➤ Our foreign policy has backed too many losers.

In the longer version, the writer matches agents and actions to subjects and verbs. But she uses ten words where one would have served. To write clearly, we have to know not only how to manage the flow of ideas but also how to express them concisely. These two principles are easier to state than to follow.

1. Usually, compress what you mean into the fewest words.

2. Don't state what your reader can easily infer.

We inflate our prose in so many ways that it's no use trying to list them all. But you might find it helpful to know the most common kinds of wordiness. This sentence illustrates most of them:

> ➤ #In my personal opinion, we must listen to and think over in a punctilious manner each and every suggestion that is offered to us.

First, an opinion can only be personal, so we can cut personal. And since any statement is implicitly opinion, we can cut in my opinion. Listen to and think over means consider, and in a punctilious manner means punctiliously, which means no more than carefully. Each and every is a redundant pair; we need only each. A suggestion is by definition something offered, and offered to someone, so neither do we need that is offered to us. What's left is much leaner:

> ➤ We must consider each suggestion carefully.

The following are simple sources of wordiness. In the following cases, you can just cross out useless words. You'll have to rewrite little, if at all.

7.4.9.1 Redundant Pairs

English has a long tradition of doubling words, a habit that we acquired shortly after we began to borrow from Latin and French the thousands of words that we have since incorporated into English. Because the borrowed word usually sounded a bit more learned than the familiar native one, early writers would use both. Among the common pairs are *full and complete, true and accurate, hopes and desires, hope and trust, each and every, first and foremost, any and all, various and sundry, basic and fundamental, questions and problems*, and, and so on and so forth. Some standard pairs are not redundant: *willing and able*.

7.4.9.2 Redundant Modifiers

Every word implies another. Finish implies complete, so *completely finish* is redundant. Memories imply past, so *past memories* is redundant. Different implies various, so *various*

different is redundant. Each implies individual, so *each individual* is redundant. Other examples are *basic fundamentals, true facts, important essentials, future plans, personal beliefs, consensus of opinion, sudden crisis, terrible tragedy, end result, final outcome, initial preparation, free gift.* In every case, we simply prune the redundant modifier. Compare:

> ➤ #We should not try to anticipate in advance those great events that will completely revolutionize our society because past history tells us that it has been the ultimate outcome of little events that has unexpectedly surprised us.
>
> ➤ We should not try to anticipate great events that will revolutionize our society because history tells us that the effect of little events has most surprised us.

In many cases, the preposition alone is redundant: *revolve around, return back, penetrate into, split apart, progress forward, continue on.* But some verb + preposition combinations are now so idiomatic that we would sound odd if we did not add them: *stand up, sit down, lie down, watch over.*

7.4.9.3 Redundant Categories

Specific words imply their general categories, so we usually don't have to state both. We know that time is a period, that the mucous membrane is an area, that pink is a color, and that shiny is an appearance. So we don't have to write:

During that period of time, the mucous membrane area became pink in color and shiny in appearance.

Only:

During that time, the mucous membrane became pink and shiny.

In some cases, we can eliminate a general category by changing an adjective into an adverb:

> ➤ #The holes must be aligned in an accurate manner.

> ➤ The holes must be accurately aligned.

And in some cases, we can change an adjective into a noun and drop the redundant noun:

> ➤ #The educational process and athletic activities are the responsibility of county
>
>   governmental systems.
>
> ➤ Education and athletics are the responsibility of county governments.

In each case we delete the general noun and leave the more specific word. Here are some general nouns often used redundantly. In every case, we can be more direct and concise by dropping the general word:

large in size, of a bright color, heavy in weight, round in shape, at an early time, of a cheap quality, honest in character, of an uncertain condition, in a confused state, unusual in nature, extreme in degree, of a strange type, curative process, regulation system, economics field, area of mathematics, criminal problem.

7.4.9.4   Meaningless Modifiers

Some modifiers are verbal tics that we use almost as unconciously as we clear our throats—words and phrases such as *kind of, really, basically, definitely, practically, actually, virtually, generally, certain, particular, individual, given, various, different, specific, for all intents and purposes*.

> ➤ #For all intents and purposes, American industrial productivity generally depends on
>
>   certain factors that are really more psychological in kind than of any given technological
>
>   aspect.

When we prune both the empty nouns and meaningless modifiers, we have a clearer and sharper sentence:

> ➤ American industrial productivity depends more on psychology than on technology.

7.4.9.5 Pompous Diction

Replacing unnecessarily formal words with more common ones may not reduce wordiness, but you will make your diction sharper and more direct.

> ➤ #Pursuant to the recent memorandum issued August 9, 1989, because of financial exigencies, it is incumbent upon us all to endeavor to make maximal utilization of telephonic communication in lieu of personal visitation.

All of that means only:

> ➤ As the memo of August 9 said, to save the company money, use the telephone as much as you can instead of making personal visits.

There is a common word for almost every fancy borrowed one. When we pick the ordinary word we rarely lose anything important. Sometimes, of course, the more obscure, more formal word is exactly the right one:

> ➤ We tried to negotiate in good faith but the union remains utterly intransigent.

Intransigent is not synonymous with stubborn or firm or fixed or unyielding or uncompromising. It means to adopt an unreasonably fixed position. We can, for example, be uncompromising about our moral behavior, but we would not want to say that we were intransigent about it, for that would suggest that we should compromise. So if we mean intransigent, then we should use intransigent. A smattering of big words and their simpler near-synonyms:

Contingent upon-dependent on	Endeavor-try
Utilization-use	Termination-end
Initiate-begin	Is desirous of-wants

Cognizant of-aware of	Ascertain-find out
Facilitate-help	Implement-start, carry out, begin
Deem-think, Envisage-think, regard, see	Advert to-mention
Apprise-inform	Eventuate-happen, Transpire-happen
Render-make, give	Transmit-send
Prior to-before	Subsequent to-after

7.4.9.6   Complex Wordiness

In these next cases, you have to think about your prose more -- carefully and then rewrite more extensively. Often, we are diffusely redundant, needlessly stating what everyone knows, or belaboring the obvious:

> ➢ #Imagine a picture of someone engaged in the activity of trying to learn the rules for playing the game of chess.

Imagine implies picture; trying to learn implies engaged in an activity; chess implies game; game implies playing. The less redundant version:

> ➢ Imagine someone trying to learn the rules of chess.

Or consider this:

> ➢ #When you write down your ideas, keep in mind that the audience that reads what you have to say will infer from your writing style something about your character.

You can write down only ideas; your audience can read only what you have to say; you write only to them; they can infer something about your character only from your writing. So in fewer words:

> ➤ Keep in mind that your readers will infer from your style something about your character.

7.4.9.7 Excessive Detail

Other kinds of redundancy are more difficult to prune. Sometimes, we provide irrelevant details:

> ➤ #Baseball, one of our oldest and most popular outdoor summer sports in terms of total attendance at ball parks and viewing on television, has the kind of rhythm of play on the field that alternates between the players' passively waiting with no action taking place between the pitches to the batter and exploding into action when the batter hits a pitched ball to one of the players and he fields it.

That is:

> ➤ Baseball has a rhythm that alternates between waiting and explosive action.

How much detail we should provide depends on how much our readers already know. In technical writing addressed to an informed audience, we can usually assume a good deal of shared knowledge:

> ➤ #The basic type results from simple rearrangement of the phonemic content of polysyllabic forms so that the initial CV of the first stem syllable is transposed with the first CV of the second stem syllable.

The writer didn't bother to define *phonemic content*, *stem syllable*, or *CV* because he assumed that anyone reading a technical linguistics journal would understand those terms. On the other

hand, this definition of *phonetic transcription*, which would never appear in a technical journal on language, is necessary in an introductory textbook:

> ➤ To study language scientifically, we need some kind of phonetic transcription, a system to write a language so that visual symbols consistently represent segments of speech.

Concise writing involves more than pruning redundancy or avoiding excessive detail, because in some situations, the writer may have no idea what counts as redundant or excessive. Every teacher of freshman English has seen papers that begin with a sentence on the order of "Shakespeare, who wrote Macbeth, wrote many other famous plays." Tell the student that he doesn't have to say that and he is likely to answer, "Why not? It's true, isn't it?" You say, "Well, yes, but you just don't have to say it. It's obvious." Moment of thoughtful silence. "What else shouldn't I say?"

7.4.9.8 A Phrase for a Word

The redundancy we've described so far results when we state what we could have left implied, a problem we can edit away simply by testing the need for every word and phrase. But another kind of redundancy is more difficult to revise, because to do so we need a precise vocabulary and the wit to use it. For example:

> ➤ #As you carefully read what you have written to improve your wording and catch small errors of spelling, punctuation, and so on, the thing to do before you do anything else is to try to see where sequences of subjects and verbs could replace the same ideas expressed in nouns rather than verbs.

In other words:

> ➤ As you edit, first find nominalizations you can replace with clauses.

Here, we have compressed several words into single words:

carefully read what you have written . . . and so on = edit

the thing to do before you do anything else = first

try to see where . . . are = find

sequences of subjects and verbs = clauses

the same ideas expressed in nouns rather than verbs = nominalizations

There are no general rules to tell you when you can compress several words into a word or two. I can only point out that you often can, and that you should be on the alert for opportunities to do so which is to say, try.

You can compress many common phrases:

the reason for	because, since, why
for the reason that	
due to the fact that owing to the fact that in	
light of the fact that considering the fact that	
on the grounds that this is why	
It is difficult to explain the reason for the delay in the completion of the investigation	It is difficult to explain why
In light of the fact that no profits were reported from 1967 through 1974, the stock values remained largely unchanged	Because no profits were reported
despite the fact that	although, even though
regardless of the fact that	
notwithstanding the fact that	

Despite the fact that the results were checked several times, serious errors crept into the findings	Even though the results
in the event that if it should transpire/happen that under circumstances in which	If
In the event that the materials arrive after the scheduled date, contact the shipping department immediately	If the materials arrive. . . .
on the occasion of in a situation in which under circumstances in which	when
In a situation in which a class is overenrolled, you may request that the instructor reopen the class	When a class is overenrolled …
as regards in reference to with regard to concerning the matter of where _____is concerned	About

I should now like to make a few observations concerning the matter of contingency funds.	I should now like to make a few observations about contingency funds
it is crucial that it is necessary that there is a need/necessity for it is important that it is incumbent upon cannot be avoided	must, should
There is a need for more careful inspection of all welds	You must inspect all welds more carefully Inspect all welds more carefully
It is important that the proposed North-South Thruway not displace significant numbers of residents.	The proposed North-South Thruway must not displace significant numbers of residents.
is able to is in a position to has the opportunity to has the capacity for has the ability to	Can
We are in a position to make you a firm offer for your house	We can make you a firm offer for your house
it is possible that	may, might, can, could

there is a chance that it could happen that the possibility exists for	
It is possible that nothing will come of these preparations	Nothing may come of these preparations
prior to in anticipation of subsequent to following on at the same time as simultaneously with	before, after, as
Prior to the expiration of the apprenticeship period, it is incumbent upon you to make application for full membership	Before your apprenticeship expires, apply for full membership
Increase Decrease	more, less/fewer; better, worse
There has been an increase in the number of universities offering adult education programs	More universities are offering adult education programs
We have noted a decrease in the quality of applicants	We have noted that applicants are less qualified

7.4.9.9   Metadiscourse, One More Time

We described metadiscourse as the language we use when we refer to our own thinking and writing as we think and write—*to summarize, on the contrary, I believe;* to the structure of what we write--*first, second, more importantly*; and to our reader's act of reading--*note that, consider now, in order to understand*. We use metadiscourse in personal narratives, arguments, memoirs in any discourse in which we filter our ideas through a concern with how our reader will take them. Except for numbers that indicate sections and so on, there is less metadiscourse in other kinds of writing operating instructions, technical manuals, laws, and the like.

The problem is to recognize when metadiscourse is useful and then to control it. Some writers use so much metadiscourse that they bury their ideas. For example:

> ➢ #The last point I would like to make here is that in regard to men-women relationships, it is important to keep in mind that the greatest changes have probably occurred in the way men and women seem to be working next to one another.

Only part of that sentence addresses men-women relationships:

. . . greatest changes have . . . occurred in the way men and women . . . working next to one another.

The rest tells readers how to understand what they are reading (metadiscourse):

> ➢ #The last point I would like to make here is that in regard to . . . it is important to keep in mind that . . . probably . . . seem to . . .

Pruned of the writing about reading, the sentence becomes more direct:

> ➢ The greatest changes in men-women relationships have occurred in the way men and women work next to one another.

And now that we can see what this sentence really says, we can make it more direct:

> ➢ Men and women have changed their relationships most in the way they work together.

In deciding how much metadiscourse to include, we can't rely on broad generalizations. Some entirely successful writers use a good deal; others equally successful, very little. Read widely in your field with an eye to how metadiscourse is used by writers you think are clear, concise, and successful. Then do likewise. Here are some of the more common types of meta discourse.

7.4.9.10 Hedges and Emphatics

Each profession has its own idiom of caution and confidence. None of us wants to sound like an uncertain milquetoast or a smug dogmatist. How successfully we walk the rhetorical line between seeming timidity and arrogance depends a good deal on how we manage phrases like a good deal, a phrase that a few words ago allowed me to pull back from the more absolute statement: How successfully we walk the rhetorical line between seeming timidity and arrogance depends on how we manage phrases like a good deal. Hedges let us sound small notes of civilized diffidence. They give us room to backpedal and to make exceptions. An appropriate emphatic, on the other hand, lets us underscore what we really believe or would like our reader to think we believe. Some of the more common he4ges: *usually, often, sometimes, almost, virtually, possibly, perl,aps, apparently, seemingly, in some ways, to a certain extent, sort of, somewhat, more or less, for the most part, for all intents and purposes, in some respects, in my opinion at least, may, might, can, could, seem, tend, try, attempt, seek, hope.*

Some of us use these so often that they become less hedges than meaningless modifiers. Some of the more common emphatics: *as everyone knows, it is generally agreed that, it is quite true that, it's clear that, it is obvious that, the fact is, as we can plainly see, literally, clearly, obviously, undoubtedly, certainly, of course, indeed, inevitably, very, invariably, always, key, central, crucial, basic, fundamental, major, cardinal, primary, principal, essential.* Words and

phrases like these generally mean not much more than "believe me." Used to excess, they make us seem arrogant or at least defensive. Or they become a kind of background static that robs a style of any clarity or precision. This is another case where a good ear will serve you better than a flat rule.

7.4.9.11 Sequencers and Topicalizers

Sequencers and topicalizers are words, phrases, and sentences that lead your reader through your text. The least useful kind are overelaborate introductions:

> ➤ #In this next section of this report, it is my intention to deal with the problem of noise pollution. The first thing I want to say is that noise pollution is . . . .

You can announce the topic of a whole discourse—or any of its parts—and hint at the structure of its argument more simply:

> ➤ The next problem is noise pollution. It . . .

Unless your paper is so complex that you have to lay out its plan in an elaborate introduction, assume that just naming the problem is sufficient to announce it as your topic, and that naming its parts suggests your organization.

Look carefully at introductory sentences that you begin with a metadiscourse subject and verb that are followed by a topic to be discussed:

> ➤ #In this essay, I will discuss Robert Frost's clumsy use of Freudian images in his early poems.

Almost always, this kind of sentence can be revised into a straightforward point that doesn't need an introduction announcing the writer's intentions:

> ➤ In his early poems, Robert Frost used Freudian images clumsily.

In fact, this kind of revision can reveal the absence of a point.

> ➢ #In this report, I will analyze GM's tactics in its acquisition of domestic suppliers.

This revises into something fairly pointless.

> ➢ GM uses tactics when it acquires domestic suppliers.

7.4.9.12 Attributors and Narrators

Attributors and narrators tell your reader where you got your ideas or facts or opinions. Sometimes, when we are still trying to work out precisely what it is we want to say, we offer a narrative of our thinking rather than its results:

> ➢ #I was concerned with the structural integrity of the roof supports, so I attempted to test the weight that the transverse beams would carry. I have concluded after numerous tests that the beams are sufficiently strong to carry the prescribed weight, but no more. I think that it is important that we notify every section that uses the facility of this finding.

If we eliminate the narrators and refocus attention on what the reader needs to know, we make the passage more pointed:

> ➢ We must notify every section that uses the storage facility that they must not exceed the prescribed kilogram-per-square-meter floor weight. Tests have established the structural integrity of the transverse beams. They are strong enough to carry the prescribed weights but no more.

Unless your subject matter is the *way* you arrived at your observations or conclusion, you can usually be more concise and direct if you simply present the most salient observations and conclusions, minus the metadiscourse or narrative.

Some writers slip anonymous attribution into their prose by stating that something has been *observed to exist, is found to exist, is seen, noticed, noted, remarked*, etc.

> ➢ #High divorce rates have been observed to occur in parts of the Northeast that have been determined to have especially low population densities.
>
> ➢ #Regular patterns of drought and precipitation have been found to coincide with cycles of sunspot activity.

Unless you have some good reason to hedge a bit, leave out the fact that any unspecified observer has observed, found, noticed, or seen something. Just state what the observer observed:

> ➢ High divorce rates occur in parts of the Northeast that have especially low population densities.
>
> ➢ Regular patterns of drought and precipitation coincide with cycles of sunspot activity.

If this seems too flat-footed, drop in a hedge: . . . *apparently coincide*.

Some metadiscourse is so unnecessary that we wonder whether the writer bothered to read over what he or she has written. But just as "belaboring the obvious" may signal a writer who is a novice in a field, so may some cases of metadiscourse. When someone is thoroughly at home in thinking through a problem, she can suppress in her prose the metadiscourse that records her thinking, allowing little or none of the intellectual process to reach the surface of her prose, or at least to remain in the final draft.

7.4.9.13 Not the Negative

For all practical purposes, these two sentences mean about the same thing:

> ➢ Don't write in the negative.

> ➤ Write in the affirmative.

But if we want to be more concise and direct, we should prefer: Write in the affirmative. To understand many negatives, we have to translate them into affirmatives, because the negative may only imply what we should do by telling us what we shouldn't do. The affirmative states it directly. Some negatives allow almost formulaic translations into affirmatives:

not many→ few not different → alike/similar	not the same → different did not → failed to
does not have→ lacks	did not stay - left
not old enough - too young	did not remember – forgot
did not consider – ignored	did not allow - prevented
did not accept – rejected	not clearly - unclearly
not possible – impossible	not able – unable
not certain – uncertain	

Now certainly this advice does not apply to those sentences that raise an issue by contradicting or denying some point that we intend to correct (as this sentence demonstrates). One of the most common ways we introduce discourse is to deny, to say "not so" to someone else's idea of the truth, or even some possible truth. Once we deny it, we then go on to assert the truth as we see It:

> ➤ In the last decade of the 20th century, we will not find within our own borders sufficient
> oil to meet our needs, nor will we find it in the world market. The only way we will

> increase our oil supply is by developing the one resource that we have so far ignored: massive conservation.

When you combine negatives with passives, nominalizations, -and compounds in sentences that are already a bit complex, your writing can become opaque:

> ➤ #Disengagement of the gears is not possible without locking mechanism release.
>
> ➤ #Payments should not be forwarded if there has not been due notification of this office.

These negatives involve two events, one a precondition of the other. We can almost always recast such negatives into more direct affirmatives if we change nominalizations into clauses and passives into actives.

> ➤ To disengage the gears, first release the locking mechanism.
>
> ➤ Before you forward any payments, notify this office.

Which you put first the outcome or the condition depends on what the reader already knows, or what the reader is looking for.

7.4.10   Length

The ability to write clear, crisp sentences that never go beyond twenty words is a considerable achievement. You'll never confuse a reader with sprawl, wordiness, or muddy abstraction. But if you never write sentences longer than twenty words, you'll be like a pianist who uses only the middle octave: you can carry the tune, but without much variety or range.

Every competent writer has to know how to write a concise sentence and how to prune a long one to readable length. But a competent writer must also know how to manage a long sentence gracefully, how to make it as clear and as vigorous as a series of short ones. Now, several long clauses in a single sentence do not in themselves constitute formless sprawl. Here is a

sentence with eighteen subordinate clauses, seventeen of them leading up to the single main clause and the eighteenth bringing up the end:

> ➤ Now if nature should intermit her course and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief—what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? -Thomas Hooker, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, 1594

Whatever else we may want to say about that sentence, it does not sprawl. Its Ciceronian intricacy may no longer appeal to most modern ears, but its clauses fit together as neatly as the universe Hooker describes. So it is not length alone, or number of clauses alone, that we ought to worry about, but rather long sentences without shape.

We can join grammatically equal segments with *and, but, yet* or *or* anywhere in a sentence. But we do it most gracefully after the subject, in the predicate. If we create a long subject, our reader has to hold her breath until she gets to the verb. Compare the second sentence in each

of these two passages. The first is Gore Vidal's original account of how the Founding Fathers viewed democracy and monarchy, the other a revised version.

The Inventors of the United States decided that there would be no hereditary titles in God's country. *Although the Inventors were hostile to the idea of democracy and believed profoundly in the sacredness of property and the necessary dignity of those who owned it*, they did not like the idea of king, duke, marquess, earl.

The Inventors of the United States decided that there would be no hereditary titles in God's country. *Their profound belief in the necessary dignity of those who owned property and in its sacredness and a hostility to the idea of democracy* did not lead them to like the idea of king, duke, marquess, and earl.

Vidal designed his coordinations so that they all appeared after his subject, and ordered them so that the shorter elements of the coordinations appeared before the longer ones:

In general, a vigorous sentence moves quickly from a short and specific subject through a strong verb to its complement, where we can, if we wish, more gracefully elaborate our syntax and more fully develop our ideas. So if we extend a sentence by coordinating its parts, we should coordinate after the subject.

In using coordination to build longer sentences, we have to avoid two problems

Faulty Parallelism. When we coordinate sentence parts that have different grammatical structures, we may create an offensive lack of parallelism. A common rule of rhetoric and grammar is that we should coordinate elements only of the same grammatical structure: clause and clause, predicate and predicate, prepositional phrase and prepositional phrase, etc.

> ➤ #These advertisements persuade us that the corporation supports environmentalism *but* not to buy its frivolous products.

Corrected:

> These advertisements persuade us that the corporation supports environmentalism *but* not that we should buy its frivolous products.

Lost Connections. What will bother readers more than mildly faulty parallelism is a coordination so long that they either lose track of its internal connections or, worse, misread them:

> #Every teacher ought to remind himself daily that his students are vulnerable people, insecure and uncertain about those everyday, ego-bruising moments that adults no longer concern themselves with, and that they do not understand that one day they will become as confident and as secure as the adults that bruise them.

That momentary flicker of hesitation about where to connect . . . and that they do not understand that one day they . . . is enough to interrupt the flow of the sentence.

To revise a sentence like this, try to shorten the first half of the coordination so that the second half is closer to that point in the sentence where the coordination begins:

> Every teacher ought to remind himself that his students are more vulnerable to those ego-bruising moments that adults have learned to cope with and that those students do not understand that one day . . .

If you can't do that, try repeating a word that will remind the reader where the second half of the coordination begins:

> Every teacher ought to remind himself that his students are vulnerable to those ego-bruising moments that adults have learned to cope with, to remind himself that those students do not understand that one day. . . .

And, of course, you can always begin a new sentence: . . . adults no longer concern themselves with. Teachers should remind themselves that their students do not understand . . . .

7.4.10.1 Subordination--Resumptive Modifiers

A resumptive modifier is a simple device that lets you extend any sentence almost indefinitely. To create a resumptive modifier, repeat a key word close to the end of a clause and then resume the line of thought with a relative clause, elaborating on what went before. Compare:

> ➤ #For several years the Columbia Broadcasting System created and developed situation comedies that were the best that American TV had to offer, such as "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "All in the Family" that sparkled with wit and invention.
>
> ➤ For several years, the Columbia Broadcasting System created and developed situation comedies that were the best that American TV had to offer, comedies such as "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" and "All in the Family," comedies that sparkled with wit and invention.

At best, that first sentence verges on monotony. The writer tacked on a relative clause, comedies that were the best, and then without a pause a second, "All in the Family'! that sparkled with wit and invention. The resumptive modifiers in the revision let us pause for a moment, catch our breath, and then move on.

7.4.10.2 Summative Modifiers

Somewhat similar is the summative modifier. With a summative modifier, you end a segment of a sentence with a comma, then sum up in a noun or noun phrase what you have just said, and then continue with a relative clause. Compare these:

> ➤ #In the last five years, European population growth has dropped to almost zero, **which** in years to come will have profound social implications.
>
> ➤ In the last five years, European population growth has dropped to almost zero, **a demographic event** that in years to come will have profound social implications.

7.4.10.3 Free Modifiers

A third kind of modifier that lets you extend a sentence and still avoid monotony resembles the previous two but works a bit differently. This modifier follows the verb but comments on its subject. It usually makes more specific what you assert in the preceding clause that you attach it to. Compare:

> ➤ #Socrates, who relentlessly questioned the very foundations of social and political behavior, forced his fellow citizens to examine the duty they owed to the laws of their gods and to the laws of their state and encouraged young people to question the authority of their elders while he maintained that he was only trying in his poor inadequate way to puzzle out the truth as best he could.

> ➤ Socrates relentlessly questioned the very foundations of social and political behavior, **forcing** his fellow citizens to examine the duty they owed to the laws of their gods and to the laws of their state, **encouraging** young people to question the authority of their elders, **maintaining** all the while that he was only trying in his poor inadequate way to puzzle out the truth as best he could.

These free modifiers most often begin with an -ing participle: The Scopes monkey trial was a watershed in American religious thinking, legitimizing the contemporary interpretation of the Bible . and making literal fundamentalism a backwater of anti-intellectual theology. But they can also begin with a past participle form of the verb:

> ➤ Leonardo da Vinci· was a man of powerful intellect, **driven** by an insatiable curiosity and **haunted** by a vision of artistic expression.

Or with an adjective:

In 1939 the United States began to assist the British in their struggle against Germany, **fully aware** that it faced another world war.

7.5 Enhancing Purpose of the Research

Each category of writing has its own characteristics and specific elements that accomplishing the purpose of the research. Bain categorized writing into three modes—Description, Narration and Exposition, all of which he considers to fall into the larger category of Persuasion. As we saw in Section 6 Writing Research, these modes of writing support each other. These categories should not be confused with the goals of the research, which may be divided into Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory (or Causal) research. All three modes of writing can be applied in all of these categories of research.

7.5.1 Exploratory Research

The goals of exploratory research include formulating problems, clarifying concepts, and forming hypotheses. Exploration can begin with a literature search, a focus group discussion, or case studies and essentially addresses the "what" question. If a survey is conducted for exploratory purposes, no attempt is made to examine a random sample of a population; rather, researchers conducting exploratory research usually look for individuals who are knowledgeable about a topic or process, or literature that elaborate on the topic. Exploratory research typically seeks to create hypotheses rather than test them. The outcome of exploratory research could be several thesis statements or an agenda for future research. Data from exploratory studies tends to be qualitative. Examples include brainstorming sessions, interviews with experts, and posting a short survey to a social networking website.

7.5.2 Descriptive Research

Descriptive studies have more guidelines and address the "what" and "how" questions. They describe concepts, people, products, phenomena and situations. Whereas exploratory studies generate speculative insights, new questions and hypotheses, descriptive studies aim to describe phenomena accurately, either through narrative type descriptions (e.g. interviews with homeless people about their experiences), classification (e.g. documenting different risks homeless people face), or discovering patterns and measuring relationships (e.g. between length of time spent homeless and health status). Descriptive studies usually have one or more guiding research questions but generally are not driven by structured research hypotheses. Nevertheless, thesis statements may be useful in guiding and focusing the research, especially in helping the writer decide what to describe. If the descriptive research is about characteristics of populations based on data collected from samples, it often requires the use of a probability sampling technique, such as simple random sampling. Data from descriptive research may be qualitative or quantitative, and quantitative data presentations are normally limited to frequency distributions and summary statistics, such as averages. Customer satisfaction surveys, presidential approval polls, and class evaluation surveys are examples of descriptive projects.

7.5.3 Explanatory Research

The primary purpose of explanatory research is to explain why phenomena occur and to predict future occurrences. Explanatory studies are characterized by research hypotheses that specify the nature and direction of the relationships between or among variables being studied. Probability sampling is normally a requirement in explanatory research because the goal is often to generalize the results to the population from which the sample is selected. The data are quantitative and almost always require the use of a statistical test to establish the validity of the relationships. For example, explanatory survey research may investigate the factors that

contribute to customer satisfaction and determine the relative weight of each factor, or seek to model the variables that lead to shopping cart abandonment.

An exploratory survey posted to a social networking website may uncover the fact that an organization's customers are unhappy. A descriptive study consisting of an e-mail survey sent to a random selection of customers who made a purchase in the past year might report the type and degree of dissatisfaction. The explanatory research would attempt to understand how different factors are contributing to customer dissatisfaction.

7.6 Enhancing Modes of Writing

In this section, we will elaborate on how the writer can enhance each of these modes of writing as well as several sub-modes related to them.

7.6.1 Writing Description

Description is related to helping the reader feel and see the phenomena being described. In academic research, descriptive writing plays the role of uncovering and making clear something that is not clear or is relatively unknown to the audience. Imagery and picturesqueness of the writing may play a role, but more likely good descriptive research will require the writer to provide concrete details as opposed to abstract words. Descriptive writing plays an important role in supporting other kinds of papers such as those that argue, compare and contrast, or seek a causal argument, by clarifying the point with clarity and force. A thesis statement helps what you plan to describe, and by stating your opinion or attitude about the topic, you can convey a general sense of purpose.

Writing guides often distinguish between subjective and objective description, and you would choose one or the other as strategy depending on your goals and audience. Subjective descriptions are typically found in qualitative research, though not exclusively so. Objective descriptions are technical; the details the writer uses are impersonal, at a distance, independent

of the perceiving mind. Of course, the quality of even the most "objective" observation depends on the observer's experiences, abilities and talent, thus, no objective observation is free from subjectivity. Although you'd avoid stating opinions in objective descriptions, there are such things are objective opinions based on expertise.

When writing, consider what the thesis is (what you will describe and how you feel about the subject) and how you will arrange the details in your paper. Where do you stand in relation to the object? Will you present details according to importance, building from the least to the most significant? What is you point you want to make through the description?

7.6.2 Writing Narratives

As explained in previous sections, storytelling makes for powerful research, and narratives is the mode of writing in storytelling. A story not only breaks the ice and formality of the research, it wins the reader over, connect us to the goals of the research more clearly, provide a frame for our thinking, prod our imaginations, and if done well can push us into action.

Narratives follow two kinds of approaches: narrative summaries and narrative moment. In the narrative summary, the writer covers large segments of time, skips over events to highlight others, and aims for broad comprehensive impressions. In the narrative moment, the writer chooses a limited time frame and explores all the details for an intense, comprehensive view of a flash of time.

You must be very clear on why you are telling about this particular event. Ask yourself, "What am I trying to demonstrate with this story?" Write down the purpose in detail so it can provide guidance as you develop the narrative framework. The outline could be:

1. To show the significance of ….

2. To follow the actions of the scientist

3. To show how misunderstanding may occur when …

You might want to state your purpose in a thesis statement or main idea sentence, somewhere in the introduction. Who is your audience? For whom are you writing the narrative? Thinking about your audience as you shape your story will help you select appropriate details and eliminate extraneous ones.

7.6.3 Writing Exemplifications

Exemplifications means providing examples to illustrate an idea with particulars. This mode of writing is crucial when writing exploratory and explanatory research, in particular, when writing theoretical or conceptual papers, because they tend to be abstract in nature. The examples provided bring the abstraction down to the ground and makes it easier for the reader to understand what is being explained. A single extended example can make a strong case, but cumulative exemplification provides an even stronger case. Here, the writer provides a series of illustrations, the accretion of related yet different instances that make the original abstract point grow and solidify. Examples move readers beyond generalizations and works as a means of anchoring general ideas in specifics.

As you define your topic, list a number of instances to use as possible means of support for your essay. Consider your aim and your audience, and produce an appropriate thesis that allows the use of exemplification. Choose from a variety of sources for examples, depending on your aim. These examples may include other research articles, quotations, paraphrases drawn from your sources, statistics and cases. Determine the number of examples you need to hold your readers' attention. To achieve coherence, link your examples so that the readers move smoothly from instance to instance; use transitions moderately to connect ideas. Here's an example by William Zinsser about cluttered writing. Notice how he weaves examples as he describes different kinds of cluttered writing:

> ➢ Fighting clutter is like fighting weeds—the writer is always slightly behind. New varieties sprout overnight, and by noon they are part of American speech. Consider what President Nixon's aide John Dean accomplished in just one day of testimony on TV during the Watergate hearings. The next day everyone in America was saying "at his point in time" instead of "now."

7.6.4 Writing Comparison and Contrast

Ideas and concepts are made clearer with the help of comparison and contrast. It allows the reader to think more deeply, make serious connections, reexamining her thinking, cast off prejudices and advance understanding of the object of study. One powerful way to accomplish these goals is by the use of figurative language. The similes and metaphors we use daily may be trite, but they reflect the human desire to see elements in our lives comparatively. There is also pleasure in breaking down barriers between classifications in order to view the subject more vividly. In writing comparisons, you must plan carefully. The comparison presents you with a double challenge: to discuss two things at once. As you approach your discussion of these two things—ideas, concepts, examples, case studies—you must reflect at length on matters such as purpose, audience and organization.

When two items are very different on the surface, stressing likeness is more appropriate because the differences are already apparent. When the two items are very similar, stressing differences makes for a more enlightening discussion. If however, two objects are both alike and not alike, you must decide which way to go. If you stress differences, it does not mean you will not deal with likeness at all, only that you won't dwell on them. Perhaps an introductory paragraph can state the obvious similarities and the rest of the paper can explore distinctions. Or, if you find similarities more interesting, you may wish to consider obvious differences first in a paragraph or two and then move on to your major concern and purpose: that the two objects,

for example, had more in common than they knew they had, that each in its own way, however unwittingly, fall prey to the pressures of society.

An effective, persuasive comparison must have a purpose—to show likeness or differences primarily. Without this purpose, you risk providing a mere catalogue of features and qualities to no good end. You may want to consider expressing the purpose of the comparison in an original statement of thesis. For example, merely writing, "There are many similarities between X and Y but also many differences," may well bore the reader. A more original thesis like, "Our similar responses to two very different issues reflect a continuing negative attitude in our community," grabs the attention of the reader and holds it. The purpose of comparison, then, is to stress similarities *or* differences *in order to make a point*. It's the additional point that distinguishes the humdrum sorting of qualities from the engaging essay. As for the audience, how much the reader knows about the subject, the readers' intellectual, social, political or aesthetic preferences, will determine how much background you must give, and what kinds of comparisons are most appropriate.

To begin a comparison, decide on the two items to compare and ensure that you have a sound basis for comparison. Identify the features or concepts that will be compared and use a grid in the prewriting stage to generate the points and illustrate them in your comparison. Formulate a thesis statement that joins the two items in an interesting formulation: "Despite obvious differences … X and Y's similarities show them both to be expressions of …" or some such sentence. With you thesis and your points of comparison developed, you are ready to organize the essay. Without careful planning, your essay can end up being an analysis of one of your subjects on a few points and then an analysis of the other on some other points—two separate analysis with no comparisons drawn. Or your essay, without proper planning, can easily become a lopsided affair, with ample discussion on one subject and a race through the next. The effective comparison is balanced and consistent. If you discuss the history of one subject,

you should discuss the history of the other. Refer to Section 4 Developing the Paragraph and the Document on how to structure the paragraphs for a comparison and contrast.

7.6.5 Writing Classifications and Topologies

Theories are the foundations of research and classifications form the basic foundations of theories. Much of analytics thinking consists of classifying concepts and constructs into meaningful categories. These categories then either become topologies, where the categories are arranged in relations to one another, or help to develop concepts that become part of the propositions for that research.

Sometimes, classification involves taking one large object of study and splitting it into parts to help readers understand that object of study. Other times, it's taking what might appear to be disparate concepts and items and placing them into related categories. Classification is a powerful tool for helping us see the patterns of our domain of study. In writing classification, other modes of writing are marshalled—description, exemplification, compare and contrast—to advance a point or position related to the classification.

Classification starts by deciding on the topic and the purpose for the classification. Are you trying to criticize or persuade? Classification lends itself to many purposes. Again, sufficient planning is critical just like in any other mode of writing. Without sufficient planning, classification can become tiresome and pointless. An essay with the following thesis risk boring the reader terribly, "Implementation falls into four categories: direct implementation, phase implementation ….". If you settle on just a catalog of information in a clinical way, readers will lose interest. Instead write, "Specific implementation methods offer major benefits over others: direct implementation may be rapid but fraught with risks, phased implementation allows for ….." Adding a unique tone to the essay will engage the audience.

Your first step in classifying is to establish the principle by which you will classify. You may want to classify microcomputers, let's say, by price, make, power, compatibility or what have you. Produce a thesis statement that expresses both your topic and your attitude towards it based on the principle of the classification. You must also be careful to be as complete as possible when developing your categories. A good rule of thumb to help you achieve a relatively complete classification is to present at least three groups. When your categories are set, decide how you will arrange them in your paper.

7.6.6 Writing Causal Analysis

What were the causes of the American Civil War? the causes of World War I? the causes of the American Great Depression? What caused the AIDS epidemic? the bubonic plague? What are the causes of unrest in Ireland? the Middle East? What effects can be attributed to phenomena such as El Niño? the hippies of the 1950s and 60s? the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s? Affirmative Action? Apartheid? the uses of DDT? holes in the ozone layer?

Writing causal analysis is the mainstay of research. It is intriguing to explore the causes of some event that you always took for granted or to chronicle the effects of some phenomenon in society or nature. The two strategic points you have to consider are (1) whether you're exploring causes or effects or both and (2) what is the order of the causes or effects you're going to pursue — from least to most important or vice versa. In a word, it answers the question, "Why?" For Aristotle, there are four major causes: efficient cause, material cause, formal cause, final cause, and most thinkers saw a necessary connection between causes and effects. In comparing two unequally successful socialist economic systems, you might explore the causes for the failures of one and the gains of the other.

Depending on the goal of the research, you might be required to discuss causes and effects, but many might focus on just one or the other. The first step in clarifying your purpose is to determine which you will be considering—causes or effects. Do you want to consider what led

up to an event or phenomena, or do you want to consider what came after it? Aside from orientation, you must take into account the scope of discussion within that orientation. Generally the causes leading to something are many and connected, as are the results. You must decide whether you wish to consider far-off causes, immediate causes, underlying causes, or precipitating events. And for results too, do you wish to write of immediate or far-reaching results, the most important or the least expected. If you decide which kinds of causes and effects you wish to include, you will be able to write with much greater purpose and direction. Your audience will determine both point of view and the scope you adopt. Does you audience have some special interest or intellectual approach? Do they know a good deal about the subject? Do you wish to deepen or instead challenge their assumptions?

Use prewriting strategies to produce the a sequence of events or phenomena involved in the topic you're interested in. Draft your time line so that your sequence stretches back though events and forward through results. This strategy will allow you to decide which ones to focus on. Use your list as a rough outline and cross out items that seem uninteresting or illogical and add other items that might make for a fuller discussion. Once you've decided on your focus, look even more critically at your analysis. Examine your list of cause and effects for problems in logic. Have you called something an effect because it happened after something else? Logicians call this error post hoc, ergo propter hoc (after this, therefore because of it); and you must be on the lookout for fallacies as you prepare to write. The next Section will cover possible fallacies that might occur in writing. Keep in mind the value of mixing different modes of writing as your topic demands it. Writing about a cause may provide an opportunity for applying exemplification. Certainly narration and description may illuminate unclear terms or establish with great precision some aspect of an effect. Compare and contrast, and classification may contribute to your outline of causes and effects.

7.6.7 Writing Argumentation and Persuasion

Argumentation will be covered in more detail in the following Section. In this Section we introduce it as a way of enhancing research, since research is essentially convincing the reader of our point of view. The essence of argumentation is a coolly rational presentation of statement and support, eschewing emotional appeal and prejudicial language and aiming instead for a person's intellectual faculty. Persuasion, on the other hand, reaches for feelings; based in logic too, but aims to arouse emotion, even passion, so that you act. The persuader's goal is to get you to agree—and then to do something about it. Good written argumentation and persuasion will be grounded in reason. The writer asserts something, takes a position (when stated formally is called a proposition), and then advances this position point by point. But like effective argumentation in life, written argumentation usually provides more than direct logical proof. Readers are complex beings, feeling and thinking at the same time, so writers have developed argumentative approaches to convince readers both through reasoning and through emotional evocation.

Effective argumentation not only will move the reader through logic but will move the reader to "feel" the writer's position as well. In effective argumentation, the writer may draw on a whole arsenal of strategies—comparison, classification, causation, description, narration and so on. A sharp anecdote, a sensory description, an explanation of a wonderful effect, an extended analogy, an apt comparison—all these can help persuade the reader to accept the writer's particular position or point of view. Good argumentation, then, can move not only our minds but also our hearts.

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This research writing guide gathers materials taken from the following texts and references and uses excerpts from them. Please refer to them for complete guidance.

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Section 8: Writing Interesting and Persuasive Research

8.1   What is Interesting Research?

Research is considered great because it is interesting. Those who write trivial research are quickly forgotten; whereas those who product interesting research are long remembered. All interesting research constitute an attack on the taken-for-granted world of their audience. In other words, the audience will consider any particular proposition worth saying only if it denies the truth of some part of their routinely held assumption-ground. If it does not challenge but merely confirms one of their taken-for-granted beliefs, they will respond to it by rejecting its value while affirming its truth. They will declare that the proposition need not be stated because it is already part of their theoretical scheme: "Of course," "That's obvious," "Everybody knows that," "It goes without saying." The taken-for-granted world includes not only the theoretical dimension but also its practical dimension as well. Research will be considered truly interesting only if it has repercussions in theory and in practice. On the latter level, research is interesting if it denies the significance of some part of their present "on-going practical activity" and insists that they should be engaged in some new on-going practical activity instead. If this practical consequence is not immediately apparent, they will respond by saying: "So what?" "Who cares?" "Why bother," and "What good is it?"

The standard form for research therefore is the following: (1) The author articulates the taken-for-granted assumptions of his audience by reviewing the literature of the subject ("It has long been thought …"), (2) she adduces one or more propositions which deny what has been traditionally assumed ("But this is false …"), (3) she spends the body of the work persuading her audience using various methodological devices that the old routinely assumed propositions are wrong while the new ones she has asserted are right ("We have seen instead that …"), ad

finally (4) in conclusion, she suggests the practical consequences of these new propositions for her audience on-going research, specifically how they ought to deflect it onto new directions ("Further investigations is necessary to …").

The general form of the interesting proposition in research first articulates a phenomenological presumption about the way a particular part of the subject had looked ("This is what X seems to be …"), then denies this presumption in the name of a more profound, more real, more ontological criterion ("In reality, it is non-X or what is accepted as X is actually non-X"). The variety of interesting propositions fall into twelve logical categories:

8.1.1 Organization

What seems to be a random or disorganized phenomenon is in reality an organized (structured) phenomenon. Or conversely, what seems to be organized is in reality disorganized. Many scientists have made their reputations by pointing out that the appearance of a phenomenon is an illusion and that what the phenomenon really consists of lies below the surface. For example, Marx reduced a large number of seemingly diverse social phenomena down to its economic components.

8.1.2 Composition

What seems to be assorted heterogeneous phenomena are in reality composed of a single element. Freud asserted that the behavior of children and adults as well as dreams, slips of tongue, which were considered at this time to be unassociated are in fact all various manifestations of the same instinctual drives. Or conversely, what seems to be a single phenomenon is in reality composed of assorted heterogeneous elements. E.g. Max Weber's assertion in *Economy and Society* that the stratification system which was considered to be monolithic, is in fact, composed of three independent variables of economic class, status privilege, and political power.

8.1.3 Abstraction

What seems to be an individual phenomenon is in reality a holistic phenomenon. Emile Durkheim's assertion in his classic *Suicide* which was considered at his time a behavior characteristic of an individual, is in fact a process characteristic of a society. Or conversely, what seems to be a holistic phenomenon is in reality an individual phenomenon. The former is often called sociologizing while the latter is often called psychologizing. Freud is the example of the classic psychologizer of social phenomena. A third type of abstraction is by denying the assumption of both individual or holistic proposition, but rather some intermediate socio-psychological level, especially if the phenomenon has already been explained both psychologically and sociologically, but disputes remain.

8.1.4 Generalization

What seems to be a local phenomenon is in reality a general phenomenon or vice versa. For example, Karl Mannheim's assertion in *Ideology and Utopia* that the ideological limitation and distortion of thought processes, which was considered at the time to effect only the bourgeois class in fact effects all social classes. It has always been the goal of the social sciences to establish rigorous procedures so that some assertion about social life can be generalized. However, it has also been the tendency of certain schools of thought such as ethnomethodology and survey research, and anthropology, to localize assertions and emphasize sub-group variations. So a research becomes interesting when something which is thought to characterize everybody (part of human nature), actually belongs merely to specific social categories and not others.

8.1.5 Stabilization

What seems to be a stable and unchanging phenomenon is in reality an unstable and changing phenomenon and vice versa. For example, Berger and Luckmann pointed out in the Social

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Construction of Reality that all enduring social institutions do not continue to exist "naturally" as stable entities, but must develop elaborate "maintenance mechanisms' to ward off constant threats to their stability. In other words, unlike traditional thought, equilibrium is not the natural state.

8.1.6 Function

What seems to be a phenomenon that functions ineffectively as a means of attainment of an end is in reality a phenomenon that functions effectively and vice versa. Merton's discussion of manifest and latent functions provides a method for shining light on deeper insights into the actual workings of some phenomenon. The researcher needs to be able to deny the manifest function or dysfunction to reveal its latent function or dysfunction. Examples of such issues include propositions that "incarceration really turns out criminals" or Foucault's "mental hospitals really make people mentally ill."

8.1.7 Evaluation

What seems a bad phenomenon is in reality a good phenomenon or vice versa. Evaluative propositions are found to be interesting when the researcher's evaluation of a phenomenon differs from the audience's evaluation of the same. The researcher can re-evaluate by either changing the rating of a phenomenon by changing its indicator (measurement or operational definition), or change the rating of a phenomenon by changing the standards in which it is to be compared. For example, the progress of certain disciplines can be compared with the progress of other disciplines, thereby changing the existing evaluation of that field. Another example is Nietzsche's assertion in On the Genealogy of Morals that Christian morality, which was considered at the time to be a good thing, is in fact a bad thing.

8.1.8 Co-relation

What seem to be unrelated (independent) phenomena are in reality correlated phenomena or vice versa. Statistics and computer technology allows for the prolific production of unlimited propositions involving correlations among phenomena which are uninteresting. They are uninteresting because they are obvious. Many social researchers have found interesting correlations among phenomena thought unrelated such as between society and self, and group pressure and individual perception, or unrelated phenomena thought to be related, such as the supposed relation between power and authority.

8.1.9 Co-existence

What seem to be phenomena which can exist together are in reality phenomena which cannot exist together or what seem to be phenomena which cannot exist together are in reality phenomena which can exist together. This type of proposition is relatively rare in the social sciences; however, in the former case, when two or more phenomena are assumed to be incompatible, they are usually assumed to be strongly incompatible, so finding that they coexist can be interesting.

8.1.10   Co-variation

What seems to be a positive co-variation between phenomena is in reality a negative co-variation between phenomena or vice versa. An example of this proposition is David Caplovitz's assertion in *The Poor Pay More* finding that at low income levels, expenditures increase instead of decreasing as the income levels get lower. The variation might occur continuously (incrementally) or discontinuously (discreet). The Marxist notion of the point at which a quantitative change suddenly turns into a qualitative change involves this type of proposition. Or what seems to be a linear co-variation is in reality a curvilinear co-variation.

8.1.11   *Opposition*

What seem to be similar (nearly identical) phenomena are in reality opposite phenomena or vice versa. Marshall McLuhan's assertion in Understanding Media that radio and television, which were considered at the time to be similar, are in fact opposite media, one being "hot" the other being "cool." When this kind of proposition are combined with Evaluation Propositions, we have the relatively formalized technique of generating interesting propositions known as "dialectical thinking" where a researcher is able to elicit responses by asserting that a seemingly positive phenomenon actually has negative characteristics of the opposite social phenomenon. An example of this dialectical thinking is the Marxian assertion that "Ownership is theft."

8.1.12   *Causation*

What seems to be independent phenomenon (variable) in a causal relation is in reality the dependent phenomenon(variable), or what seems the dependent phenomenon (variable) is in reality the independent phenomenon (variable). For example, Max Weber's assertion in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that the religion of a society, which was considered to be at the time determined by the economy of the society, in fact determines the economy of the society. This type of proposition evokes interest by reversing the causal relationship. The nature of the relationship can also evoke interest. What seems to be a simple one-way causal relation between phenomena is actually a complex mutual interaction. A case in point is Weber's *Sociology of Religion* later shows that he does not exclusively define either religion or economy as the independent or dependent variable; rather he shows that both religion and economy reciprocally influence each other's development.

8.2   The Literature Review

As emphasized earlier, research becomes interesting when the taken-for-granted assumptions are challenged. The research therefore needs to be very clear on those taken-for-granted

assumptions. Additionally, the literature review demonstrates that you have acquired a deep understanding of the topic, what has already been done on it, how it has been researched, and what the key issues are. In your written project, you are expected to show that you understand previous research on your topic, understood the main theories in the subject area, how they have been applied and developed, as well as the main criticisms that have been made of the work on the topic. The review is therefore a part of your academic development—of becoming an expert on the field.

Typically, the literature review becomes merely an annotated bibliography and often relate only tangentially to the goals of the research. A quality review implies appropriate breadth and depth, rigor and consistency, clarity and brevity, and especially effective analysis and synthesis that justifies the particular approach, selection of methods and demonstrates that the research does indeed contribute something new. The mechanics of collecting the research knowledge and information is not included in this section. That information can be found in any research textbook guide and they typically enumerate the various sources available (e.g. electronic databases, abstracts and indices, bibliographic database, scholarly books, articles in journals, reports, seminars, theses, conference papers, biographies, websites, interviews, encyclopedia, magazines, newspapers, etc.). Search skills are critical for any researcher and the quality of the literature directly depends on the quality of the researcher's search skills.

For example, for a sociology, a researcher is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the philosophy of the social sciences including an understanding of major alternative philosophical positions for theory construction, appraisal and testing, explanatory goals of theories and for the use of their models; understanding how various positions affect research design, research choices, data collection and analysis techniques; understanding of the theoretical issues and debates for those engaged in empirical work and evaluation of research. The sociological researcher is expected to be able to formulate researchable problems and translate them into

practical research designs; make informed judgments about ethical and moral issues; understand the uses and implications of experimental study, survey research, comparative studies, longitudinal studies, ethnography, case studies, replication studies, evaluation research and action research. They should be aware of alternative data collection and analysis methods including archival and historical data, official statistics, participant observation, field work, interviewing methods and methods of recording data including note taking, audio and video, data coding and identifying relationships, and statistical analysis methods.

The literature review can be defined as the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic that contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed. Scholarly activity is about knowing how to do competent research, read, interpret and analyze arguments, synthesize ideas and make connections across disciplines, write and present ideas clearly and systematically, and using your imagination. A key element of good scholarship is *integration*. Integration is about making connections between ideas, theories and experiences, applying a method form one area to another, placing some episode into a larger theoretical framework, thereby providing a new way of looking at that phenomenon. This might mean drawing elements from different theories to form a new synthesis or provide new insight. It might also mean re-examining an existing body of knowledge in the light of a new development. It might mean forcing new typologies onto the structure of existing taken-for-granted perspectives. Therefore, systematic questioning, inquiring and a scrutinizing attitude are features of scholarly activity. At the master's level, this might mean looking or applying a methodology in ways not tried before. At the doctoral level, it might mean attempting to refigure or re-specify the way in which some puzzle or problem has traditionally been defined. But as Clifford Geertz (1980), wrote, refiguring is not just about

tampering with the details of the theories by adding or rearranging variables, or redrawing the cultural map or disputed borders, it's about altering the very principles by which we map the social world. Just like Copernicus, who didn't just add one or more planets around a motionless earth at the center of the universe, he asked himself if it was possible for everything including the earth was moving. Similarly, Garfinkel reviewed traditional sociological theory and found that it ignored what real people do in real situations; the result of which was ethnomethodology.

Doing so can be very challenging to the student, especially when it comes to reading materials across disciplines that the student may not be familiar with. After reading all the materials, a lot of effort is required to make their review clear, consistent and coherent, and not make relatively simple ideas more complex than they need to be. The reviewer should also be open to other views from her own discipline or from other disciplines. No matter how difficult the materials are, the reviewer has to assume that the author has something to contribute and make an effort to tease out the main ideas from the text under consideration. The literature review ensure the "researchability" of the topic before the proper research commences. It is the progressive narrowing of the topic, through the literature review, that makes most research a practical consideration.

8.2.1 Required Skills and Output

A postgraduate thesis is assessed for its worthiness and the literature review plays a major role in this assessment. Each level (master's or doctoral) requires a competent review of a body of literature but with different goals:

8.2.1.1 Master's Level

The kinds of skills needed are those associated with research design, data collection, information management, analysis of data, synthesis of data from existing knowledge and evaluation of existing ideas along with a critical evaluation of your own work. There should be

clear links between the aims of the research and the literature review, the choice of research design, and means used to collect data, discussion of the issues and conclusions and recommendations.

Table 1: Criteria for assessing a master's dissertation

	Excellent work	Competent Work
Aims, objectives and justification	Clear aims able to be operationalized. Explanation of the topic with succinct justification using the literature	Clear aims with acceptable justification
Methodology and data collection	Choice of methodology shows considerable evidence of reading and understanding. Clear research design with weaknesses dealt with	Methodology described but not in comparative terms. May have replicated bias inherent in previous work
Literature review and evaluation	Thorough review of relevant literature, systematically analyzed with all variables and arguments defined. Evaluation firmly linked to justification and methodology	Acceptable review of main literature with variables and arguments defined. Some links made to methodology and justification
Style and presentation	Clear and cohesive structure. Very well presented with	Clear structure and arrangement of materials with

	accurate citations and bibliography. Impressive use of visual and graphic devices.	accurate citations, appropriate use of visuals.
Overall coherence and academic rigor	Systematic approach, critically reflexive, clear and logical in structuring the argument, proper use of language, assumptions stated, identification of gaps and possibility for future research and publication opportunities.	Considered approach, clarity in structure of presentation, satisfactory use of language, assumptions mostly stated, and further research identified.

8.2.1.2 Doctoral Level

Seven main requirements cover the content, process and product of the doctoral thesis:

Specialization in scholarship – The doctoral student needs to demonstrate subject-specific knowledge and familiarity with "founding theorists" and "current notables."

Making a new contribution – Through work and effort of reading and seeking out ways within the specialty, the student needs to advance understanding through making a new contribution. The student should resist the temptation to make prior assumptions about any ideas before being knowledgeable about that idea.

Demonstrate high level of scholarship – A key part of the thesis is the literature review and it should provide enough evidence of the right type and form that the student has reached the appropriate level of intellectual skills and abilities. The review Section might consist of 30 to 40

pages in a doctoral thesis and may require more for theoretical based works. It should represent the sum total of current knowledge on the topic, ideas, methodologies and techniques to collect data, and reflect on implications and possibilities for certain ideas.

Demonstrate originality – It is through this focusing process that an original treatment of an established topic can be developed. In academic research, the aim is not just to replicate what has already been done, but to add in some way, no matter how small, something that helps us further our understanding of the world we live in. Originality could mean doing empirically something not done before, using already known ideas or practices in new ways, bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue or problem, creating a new synthesis that has not been done before, applying something done in another area or location to one's own, being cross-disciplinary by using different methodologies, looking at areas people in the discipline has not looked at or adding to knowledge in a way that has not previously been done before.

8.2.2 Reviewing and Research Imagination

The originality of the research work often depends on a critical reading of a wide-range of literature, avoiding the shallowness of "quick and dirty" that student undertake because of time pressures. Without a systematic search and critical reading, it would be very difficult to see how any new contribution could be accomplished, especially since knowledge generation is an emergent process that depends on multiple factors. The review should begin with an understanding of the history of the subject they intend to study, which will result in acquiring sufficient knowledge of the subject area and comprehending significant work already done in the field. As a result, the review should produce:

1. What has been done and what needs to be done

2. Important variables relevant to the topic

3. A synthesis of new perspectives

4. Relationships between ideas and practice

5. Context of the topic, key landmark studies

6. Significance of the problem, and key questions asked

7. Enhancement of the subject vocabulary

8. Understanding the structure of the subject, gaps and anomalies in previous research

9. Relationship between theory and applications

10. Main methodologies and research techniques used

11. Position of the research in a historical context.

As C. Wright Mills wrote, the researcher needs to have an imagination that allows her to shift from one perspective to another, build an adequate view of the subject that distinguishes the researcher from a mere technician. This research imagination takes time to develop. It is about having a broad view and being open to ideas regardless of how or where they originated.

8.3   Well-crafted argument

The bulk of writing persuasive research lies in the ability to construct formal arguments that succeed in making strong points, solve real problems or change minds. Argument is the spirit of many disciplines. A researcher seeing fault, error or other possibilities in the work of another, and making suggestions for improvement or change is what makes for progress in their field. Being able to recognize the structure and substance of an argument, and being able to construct one is a necessary ability in everyday life, and especially so for the academic researcher. An argument is *a form of discourse in which the writer or speaker tries to persuade an audience to accept, reject, or think a certain way about a problem that cannot be solved by scientific or mathematical reasoning alone*. The assertion that the circumference of a circle is a product of its diameter times *pi* is not arguable or disputed, therefore not an argument. The

assertion that public flogging would be more effective deterrent than jailing is voicing an opinion, not presenting an argument. If that person shows a correlation between public punishment and crime rate then the assertion is shaping into an argument. The word argument is derived from the Latin word arguer, which means to clarify or prove. A good argument takes time and effort to prepare, It not only presents evidence to back up its claim, but also acknowledges the existence of other claims about the issue before committing to the claim that corresponds to the arguer's convictions. A good argument also guides the audience through a logical, step-by-step line of reasoning from thesis to conclusion. In short, a good argument uses an argumentative structure.

8.3.1 Full Definition

Given our discussion the definition of an argument can be amplified further: An argument is a form of discourse in which the writer or speaker presents a pattern of reasoning, reinforced by detailed evidence and refutation of challenging claims, that tries to persuade the audience to accept the claim. The pattern of reasoning implies disclosing the writer's train of thought in a logical progression that leads the reader from thesis to support to conclusion, and clarifying any unfamiliar terms of concepts, and providing enough background information to enable readers to understand the larger context contributing to the argument. Reinforced by detailed evidence implies providing specific, compelling evidence that is accurate, timely, relevant and sufficient, either from surveys, experiments, observations, statistics or expert opinion. Evidence can be indisputable (factual) or disputable. Persuading means to convince the reader that the arguer's point of view is sensible and worthy of serious consideration if not outright acceptance, with the help of appeals—to authority, values, feelings and reason. Aristotle identified three kinds of appeals:

Ethical – appeal to tradition, authority, moral behavior, which he terms ethos.

Emotional – appeal to feelings, basic human needs such as security, love, belonging, health and well-being, which he calls pathos, and

Rational – appeal to reason and logic, which he terms logos.

8.3.2 Classical Model of Argument

The classical model of argument is *rhetoric*, or the art of using language persuasively. In the ancient world, rhetoric was taught as part of public speaking (oratory) and was basic preparation for students entering law, politics and teaching. Early rhetoricians were called *Sophists*, who emphasized pragmatic skills in winning an argument. The Platonic school and its most famous student Aristotle reshaped it as a sort of middle ground between idealistic truth-seeking goals of Plato, and the mercenary pragmatism of the Sophists by viewing rhetoric as the art of finding the best available means of persuasion in a given case using the rigors of philosophical reasoning on practical problems. The classical model for structuring an argument consisted of:

1. An introduction

    a. With a lead-in

    b. An overview of the situation

    c. And a Background

2. Position statement (thesis) and evidence

3. Appeals (ethos, pathos and logos) and evidence (statistics, results, findings, examples, laws and relevant passages from authoritative texts

4. Refutation (often presented simultaneously as the evidence)

5. Conclusion (peroration)

    a. Highlights of key points presented

    b. Recommendations

    c. Illuminating restatement of thesis

Much of the classical model including how to write introductions, reinforce evidence with appeals, references to opposing views and the conclusion is already described in previous Sections (see Section 6 Writing Research and Section 7 Enhancing Research Quality).

8.3.3 Toulmin Model of Argument

Stephen Toulmin developed a system of argument that has proven to be useful especially for conceptual and theoretical papers. The terms of the argument are:

Claims –the viewpoint or thesis you want your readers to accept.

Evidence – To accomplish this goal data or the grounds is presented. In formal experiments evidence might take the form of results and observations or mathematical and statistical analysis. In other context evidence might take the shape of laws, rules, policies or highly valued customs.

Warrant – The guarantee that the data or evidence used to support the claim truly are valid. Anyone can conjure up all sorts of data to support a claim.

Qualifier – An exception to the claim under certain circumstances.

8.3.3.1   Claim

The term comes from the Latin word *clamare*, to cry out, reminding us of the spontaneity with which sometimes claims are made. For an argument to succeed, the writer must ensure that the claim is worthy of deliberation. Objective claims assert that something actually exists and present evidence that is demonstrably factual. For example, video games heighten a child's hand-eye coordination, but they impede the development of language processing skills. They are not self-evident truths and must be supported with appropriate evidence before readers can accept them as factual. The arguer must show for example, that psychologists have compared the learning behaviors of children who play video games with those children who do not and have found enough evidence to establish a causal link between video-game playing and

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abstract reasoning. Subjective (or normative) claims, on the other hand, assert that something should exist and present evidence derived from ethical, moral, aesthetic convictions. Someone who argues that animals should be treated with dignity is making a subjective claim.

8.3.3.2 Evidence (Data or Grounds)

Writers should take pains to ensure that the supporting evidence fully validates the claim. The word data suggest "hard facts"—results from experiments, statistics from surveys, as well as historical, legal and biographical facts. For more indirect kinds of evidence, such as testimonials or interpretations, the terms ground or backing is more appropriate. Like claims, data or grounds must be presented as accurately and as unambiguously as possible.

8.3.3.3 Warrant

Warrants "indicate the bearing on our conclusion of the data already produced" (The Uses of Argument, Stephen Toulmin). Here "bearing" means the need for readers to recognize and accept an appropriate direction in which the argument takes shape from the claim to data to warrant. It reminds us of the need for any argument, however heated, to be principled rather than stem on vague or questionable motives. The writer might claim that:

> ➤ Letter grades should be abolished because they result in unhealthy competition, distract students from truly learning the subject matter, and constitute an inadequate gauge of student performance.

The writer is asked, "What do you have to prove your claim is valid?" The writer presents evidence comparing the performance in terms of their ability to complete some task of students in letter-graded class with the performance of students in Pass/No Pass class. But others may not agree with that this evidence supports the claim. They question is not "What proof do you have?" but "How did you get there?" To present a particular set of data as the basis for some specified conclusion commits the writer to a certain *step*; and the question is now one about the

nature and justification of this step. The warrant is then not data but some kind of theory, principle, rule or inferences or what you will showing that the step taken to the claim is appropriate or legitimate usually written in the form "If A then B". The warrant offered might go something like this:

> ➢ Learning for its own sake is more satisfying to students than learning to achieve predetermined standards of proficiency.

In other words, the guarantee that the data are based on solid principles, thus contributing to the validity of the claim.

Toulmin adds two more elements to his structure: Qualifiers and Rebuttals. Since claims are rarely absolute, qualifiers indicate the strength conferred by the warrant on this step, while rebuttal (R) indicate circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside.

An example structure that can be applied in the pre-writing stage for an argument is shown below:

Claim: Secondhand smoke is hazardous enough to justify prohibiting smoking in all public places.

Questions about the claim: Is it valid, what makes it valid, is it practical? Are there qualifications? What will be some challenges to this claim?

Data: Statistical information from the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, and the American Medical Association, the most recent Surgeon General's report on secondhand smoke, personal testimonials of those who became seriously ill as a result of long-term exposure to secondhand smoke.

Questions about the data: Do I have sufficient data to support my claim? Are there important sources of information that I overlooked? Is my data reliable, biased or manipualated? How can I test the data?

Warrant: Is is more important for people to have the freedom to breathe clean air than for smokers to have the freedom to befoul the air.

Questions about the warrant: Do I really believe that "freedom" in the context of smoking has to be be qualified to include freedom from encroaching on one's right to breathe smoke-free air? What other warrants might I identify? Am I prepared to stand behind my warrant?

8.3.4 Rogerian Model of Argument

From Carl Rogers' point of view, the Classical or Toulmin model tend to divide people into proponents or opponents. Instead of winning or losing an argument, or attacking and marshalling evidence, all of which use militaristic metaphors, Rogers believed that people can cooperate and interact harmoniously if they can find common ground. A paper in the Rogerian mode assumes that readers firmly hold differing views and therefore will resist hearing others' position, so instead of inflexibly arguing, the writer can locate views on the issue that both can agree on. The virtue of finding common ground is that one can isolate and resolve the points of opposition more effectively after identifying the points of agreement because the writer reduces any hostility the audience might have by demonstrating an understanding of the audience's perspective. The writer's goal is not to win or to prove wrong; it is to work together cooperatively to arrive at an agree-on truth.

1. Introduction: What is our shared problem? Let's see if we can work together to resolve it.

2. What we agree on.

3. What we differ: misunderstandings, such as drawbacks or limited application to others' solutions, and the possible reasons behind those drawbacks or limitations.

4. Possible drawbacks or limitations to writer's solutions, followed by greater benefits of writers' solutions.

5. How we can resolve our differences.

Rogerian persuasion requires writers to work hard at developing multiple perspectives towards issues, and must be tolerant and respectful enough of differing viewpoints to take the time to fathom the value systems that underlie them. The first step is to *listen with understanding*. In writing, this implies anticipating questions and counter-responses that challengers present. By stressing the audience's needs, the writer will be more inclined to take a cooperative stance rather than a defensive or combative one.

8.4   Logic and Reasoning

Aristotle also developed the foundations of logic (logos) that most of our logical argumentation is based on. Logic is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning. The aim of the study of logic is to discover and make available the criteria for correct reasoning that can be used to test arguments, and to sort out good arguments from bad ones. Every discipline has their own subject matter related to logic, but they all draw from the same form and quality that applies to all disciplines. Does the conclusion reached follow from the premises used or assumed? Do the premises provide good reasons for accepting the conclusion drawn?

8.4.1 Propositions and Sentences

A proposition is a something that may be asserted or denied. A proposition is different from a question, command or exclamation. Neither of them can be asserted or denied. Every

proposition is either true or false—although we may not know the truth or falsity of some given propositions. Propositions are often compound, so the reader needs to unpack them.

8.4.2 Argument, Premise and Conclusion

Propositions are the building blocks with which arguments are made. The term *inference* refers to the process by which one proposition is arrived at and affirmed on the basis of one or more propositions accepted as the starting point of the process. To determine whether an inference is correct, the logician examines the propositions with which the process begins and ends, and the relations between them. This cluster of propositions constitutes an *argument (in its strict sense)*. It is with arguments that logic is chiefly concerned. For a logician:

1. An argument is any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others, which are regarded as providing support or grounds for the truth of that one.

2. The conclusion of an argument is the proposition that is affirmed on the basis of other propositions of the argument.

3. The premises are the other propositions, which provide support or reasons for accepting the conclusion.

Consider the following hypothetical proposition:

> ➢ If life evolved on Mars during an early period in its history when it had an atmosphere and climate similar to Earth's, then, it is likely that life evolved on countless other planets that scientists believe to exist in our galaxy.

There are two components in this compound proposition:

1. life evolved on Mars during an early period in its history when it had an atmosphere and climate similar to Earth's

2. it is likely life evolved on countless other planets that scientists believe to exist in our galaxy

None of these propositions are asserted. Both propositions could be false. The whole proposition asserts only that the former implies the latter. No inferences are made in this passage and no conclusion is claimed to be true. This is therefore a hypothetical proposition, NOT an argument.

Consider the following passage:

> ➢ It is likely life evolved on countless other planets that scientists believe to exist in our galaxy, because life very probably evolved on Mars during an early period in its history when it had an atmosphere and climate similar to Earth's.

In this case, we do have an argument. The proposition that "life very probably evolved on Mars" is here asserted as a premise, and the proposition that "life evolved on countless other planets" is here claimed to follow from that premis and to be true. So, every argument is a structured cluster of propositions, but not every structured cluster of propositions is an argument.

8.4.3 Recognizing Arguments

The order in which propositions appear in argumentative passage cannot be relied upon to identify the conclusion or the premise. Certain words or phrases are helpful because they typically introduce the conclusions of an argument. Here is a partial list:

Therefore	In consequence
For these reasons	Which means that
Hence	Consequently
It follows that	Which entails that
Thus	Proves that

We may infer	Which implies that
So	As a result
I conclude that	Which allows us to infer that
Accordingly	For this reason
Which shows that	Which points to the conclusion that

Other words point toward premises: Here is a partial list of premise indicators:

Since	May be inferred from
As indicated by	Follows from
Because	May be derived from
The reason is that	As shown by
For	May be deduced from
For the reason that	Inasmuch as
As	In view of the fact that

The words and phrases listed above may help us recognize the presence of any argument or identify its premises or conclusions, but it is not necessary for these terms to appear. The argument may be presented by the setting or the meaning of the passage. For example:

➢ Whether or not to smoke is a conscious decision, made in the light of an abundance of information on the lethal effects of tobacco. Surely those who choose unwisely should bear the costs of any resulting ill health.

Nor premise or conclusion indicators are present in this passage, but the argument is unmistakable.

8.4.4 Deduction and Induction

There are two major classes of arguments: deductive and inductive. A deductive argument makes the claim that its conclusions is supported by its premises conclusively. In contrast, an inductive argument does not make such a claim. So we judge that such a claim is not being made, we treat it as inductive. When an argument makes the claim that its premises (if true) provide irrefutable grounds for the truth of its conclusions, that claim will be either correct or not correct. If it is correct, that argument is valid. If it is not correct, that is if the premises fail to establish the conclusion irrefutably, that argument is invalid. For logicians, the term validity is applicable only to deductive arguments. So every deductive argument is either valid or invalid.

Inductive arguments do not claim that their premises, even if true, support their conclusions with certainty. They make a weaker but nonetheless important claim that their premises support their conclusions with probability, which always falls short of certainty. Inductive arguments are neither valid or invalid. They are still evaluated. In fact, today, the appraisal of inductive arguments is one of the leading tasks of scientists. Because an inductive argument can yield no more than some degree of probability for its conclusions, it is always possible that additional information will strengthen or weaken it. Deductive arguments on the other hand, cannot be gradually better or worse.

8.5   Logical Fallacies

Most academic writing tasks require you to make an argument—that is, to present reasons for a particular claim or interpretation you are putting forward. You may have been told that you need to make your arguments more logical or stronger. And you may have worried that you simply aren't a logical person or wondered what it means for an argument to be strong. Learning to

make the best arguments you can is an ongoing process, but it isn't impossible: "Being logical"

is something *anyone* can do, with practice.

You can make your arguments stronger by

1. **using good premises** (ones you have good reason to believe are both true and relevant to the issue at hand),

2. making sure your premises **provide good support for your conclusion** (and not some other conclusion, or no conclusion at all),

3. checking that you have **addressed the most important or relevant aspects** of the issue (that is, that your premises and conclusion focus on what is really important to the issue), and

4. **not making claims that are so strong or sweeping that you can't really support them**.

You also need to be sure that you present all of your ideas in an orderly fashion that readers can follow. It is particularly easy to slip up and commit a fallacy when you have strong feelings about your topic—if a conclusion seems obvious to you, you're more likely to just assume that it is true and to be careless with your evidence. To help you see how people commonly make this mistake, this handout uses a number of controversial political examples—arguments about subjects like abortion, gun control, the death penalty, gay marriage, euthanasia, and pornography. The purpose of this handout, though, is not to argue for any particular position on any of these issues; rather, it is to illustrate weak reasoning, which can happen in pretty much any kind of argument.

Fallacies are defects that weaken arguments. By learning to look for them in your own and others' writing, you can strengthen your ability to evaluate the arguments you make, read, and hear. It is important to realize two things about fallacies: first, fallacious arguments are very,

very common and can be quite persuasive, at least to the casual reader or listener. You can find dozens of examples of fallacious reasoning in newspapers, advertisements, and other sources. Second, it is sometimes hard to evaluate whether an argument is fallacious. An argument might be very weak, somewhat weak, somewhat strong, or very strong. An argument that has several stages or parts might have some strong sections and some weak ones. The goal of this handout, then, is not to teach you how to label arguments as fallacious or fallacy-free, but to help you look critically at your own arguments and move them away from the "weak" and toward the "strong" end of the continuum.

For each fallacy listed, there is a definition or explanation, an example, and a tip on how to avoid committing the fallacy in your own arguments.

8.5.1 Hasty generalization

Definition: Making assumptions about a whole group or range of cases based on a sample that is inadequate (usually because it is atypical or too small). Stereotypes about people ("librarians are shy and smart," "wealthy people are snobs," etc.) are a common example of the principle underlying hasty generalization.

Example: "My roommate said her philosophy class was hard, and the one I'm in is hard, too. All philosophy classes must be hard!" Two people's experiences are, in this case, not enough on which to base a conclusion.

Tip: Ask yourself what kind of "sample" you're using: Are you relying on the opinions or experiences of just a few people, or your own experience in just a few situations? If so, consider whether you need more evidence, or perhaps a less sweeping conclusion. (Notice that in the example, the more modest conclusion "*Some* philosophy classes are hard for *some* students" would not be a hasty generalization.)

8.5.2 Missing the point

Definition: The premises of an argument do support a particular conclusion—but not the conclusion that the arguer actually draws.

Example: "The seriousness of a punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. Right now, the punishment for drunk driving may simply be a fine. But drunk driving is a very serious crime that can kill innocent people. So the death penalty should be the punishment for drunk driving." The argument actually supports several conclusions—"The punishment for drunk driving should be very serious," in particular—but it doesn't support the claim that the death penalty, specifically, is warranted.

Tip: Separate your premises from your conclusion. Looking at the premises, ask yourself what conclusion an objective person would reach after reading them. Looking at your conclusion, ask yourself what kind of evidence would be required to support such a conclusion, and then see if you've actually given that evidence. Missing the point often occurs when a sweeping or extreme conclusion is being drawn, so be especially careful if you know you're claiming something big.

8.5.3 Post hoc (also called false cause)

This fallacy gets its name from the Latin phrase "*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*," which translates as "after this, therefore because of this."

Definition: Assuming that because B comes after A, A caused B. Of course, sometimes one event really does cause another one that comes later—for example, if I register for a class, and my name later appears on the roll, it's true that the first event caused the one that came later. But sometimes two events that seem related in time aren't really related as cause and event. That is, correlation isn't the same thing as causation.

Examples: "President Jones raised taxes, and then the rate of violent crime went up. Jones is responsible for the rise in crime." The increase in taxes might or might not be one factor in the rising crime rates, but the argument hasn't shown us that one caused the other.

Tip: To avoid the *post hoc* fallacy, the arguer would need to give us some explanation of the process by which the tax increase is supposed to have produced higher crime rates. And that's what you should do to avoid committing this fallacy: If you say that A causes B, you should have something more to say about how A caused B than just that A came first and B came later.

8.5.4 Slippery slope

Definition: The arguer claims that a sort of chain reaction, usually ending in some dire consequence, will take place, but there's really not enough evidence for that assumption. The arguer asserts that if we take even one step onto the "slippery slope," we will end up sliding all the way to the bottom; he or she assumes we can't stop partway down the hill.

Example: "Animal experimentation reduces our respect for life. If we don't respect life, we are likely to be more and more tolerant of violent acts like war and murder. Soon our society will become a battlefield in which everyone constantly fears for their lives. It will be the end of civilization. To prevent this terrible consequence, we should make animal experimentation illegal right now." Since animal experimentation has been legal for some time and civilization has not yet ended, it seems particularly clear that this chain of events won't necessarily take place. Even if we believe that experimenting on animals reduces respect for life, and loss of respect for life makes us more tolerant of violence, that may be the spot on the hillside at which things stop—we may not slide all the way down to the end of civilization. And so we have not yet been given sufficient reason to accept the arguer's conclusion that we must make animal experimentation illegal right now.

Like post hoc, slippery slope can be a tricky fallacy to identify, since sometimes a chain of events really can be predicted to follow from a certain action. Here's an example that doesn't seem fallacious: "If I fail English 101, I won't be able to graduate. If I don't graduate, I probably won't be able to get a good job, and I may very well end up doing temp work or flipping burgers for the next year."

Tip: Check your argument for chains of consequences, where you say "if A, then B, and if B, then C," and so forth. Make sure these chains are reasonable.

8.5.5 Weak analogy

Definition: Many arguments rely on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas, or situations. If the two things that are being compared aren't really alike in the relevant respects, the analogy is a weak one, and the argument that relies on it commits the fallacy of weak analogy.

Example: "Guns are like hammers—they're both tools with metal parts that could be used to kill someone. And yet it would be ridiculous to restrict the purchase of hammers—so restrictions on purchasing guns are equally ridiculous." While guns and hammers do share certain features, these features (having metal parts, being tools, and being potentially useful for violence) are not the ones at stake in deciding whether to restrict guns. Rather, we restrict guns because they can easily be used to kill large numbers of people at a distance. This is a feature hammers do not share—it would be hard to kill a crowd with a hammer. Thus, the analogy is weak, and so is the argument based on it.

If you think about it, you can make an analogy of some kind between almost any two things in the world: "My paper is like a mud puddle because they both get bigger when it rains (I work more when I'm stuck inside) and they're both kind of murky." So the mere fact that you can draw an analogy between two things doesn't prove much, by itself.

Arguments by analogy are often used in discussing abortion—arguers frequently compare fetuses with adult human beings, and then argue that treatment that would violate the rights of an adult human being also violates the rights of fetuses. Whether these arguments are good or not depends on the strength of the analogy: do adult humans and fetuses share the properties that give adult humans rights? If the property that matters is having a human genetic code or the potential for a life full of human experiences, adult humans and fetuses do share that property, so the argument and the analogy are strong; if the property is being self-aware, rational, or able to survive on one's own, adult humans and fetuses don't share it, and the analogy is weak.

Tip: Identify what properties are important to the claim you're making, and see whether the two things you're comparing both share those properties.

8.5.6 Appeal to authority

Definition: Often we add strength to our arguments by referring to respected sources or authorities and explaining their positions on the issues we're discussing. If, however, we try to get readers to agree with us simply by impressing them with a famous name or by appealing to a supposed authority who really isn't much of an expert, we commit the fallacy of appeal to authority.

Example: "We should abolish the death penalty. Many respected people, such as actor Guy Handsome, have publicly stated their opposition to it." While Guy Handsome may be an authority on matters having to do with acting, there's no particular reason why anyone should be moved by his political opinions—he is probably no more of an authority on the death penalty than the person writing the paper.

Tip: There are two easy ways to avoid committing appeal to authority: First, make sure that the authorities you cite are experts on the subject you're discussing. Second, rather than just saying "Dr. Authority believes X, so we should believe it, too," try to explain the reasoning or evidence

that the authority used to arrive at his or her opinion. That way, your readers have more to go on than a person's reputation. It also helps to choose authorities who are perceived as fairly neutral or reasonable, rather than people who will be perceived as biased.

8.5.7 Ad populum

Definition: The Latin name of this fallacy means "to the people." There are several versions of the *ad populum* fallacy, but in all of them, the arguer takes advantage of the desire most people have to be liked and to fit in with others and uses that desire to try to get the audience to accept his or her argument. One of the most common versions is the bandwagon fallacy, in which the arguer tries to convince the audience to do or believe something because everyone else (supposedly) does.

Example: "Gay marriages are just immoral. 70% of Americans think so!" While the opinion of most Americans might be relevant in determining what laws we should have, it certainly doesn't determine what is moral or immoral: there was a time where a substantial number of Americans were in favor of segregation, but their opinion was not evidence that segregation was moral. The arguer is trying to get us to agree with the conclusion by appealing to our desire to fit in with other Americans.

Tip: Make sure that you aren't recommending that your readers believe your conclusion because everyone else believes it, all the cool people believe it, people will like you better if you believe it, and so forth. Keep in mind that the popular opinion is not always the right one.

8.5.8 Ad hominem and tu quoque

Definitions: Like the appeal to authority and *ad populum* fallacies, the *ad hominem* ("against the person") and *tu quoque* ("you, too!") fallacies focus our attention on people rather than on arguments or evidence. In both of these arguments, the conclusion is usually "You shouldn't believe So-and-So's argument." The reason for not believing So-and-So is that So-and-So is

either a bad person (*ad hominem*) or a hypocrite (*tu quoque*). In an *ad hominem* argument, the arguer attacks his or her opponent instead of the opponent's argument.

Examples: "Andrea Dworkin has written several books arguing that pornography harms women. But Dworkin is just ugly and bitter, so why should we listen to her?" Dworkin's appearance and character, which the arguer has characterized so ungenerously, have nothing to do with the strength of her argument, so using them as evidence is fallacious.

In a *tu quoque* argument, the arguer points out that the opponent has actually done the thing he or she is arguing against, and so the opponent's argument shouldn't be listened to. Here's an example: imagine that your parents have explained to you why you shouldn't smoke, and they've given a lot of good reasons—the damage to your health, the cost, and so forth. You reply, "I won't accept your argument, because you used to smoke when you were my age. You did it, too!" The fact that your parents have done the thing they are condemning has no bearing on the premises they put forward in their argument (smoking harms your health and is very expensive), so your response is fallacious.

Tip: Be sure to stay focused on your opponents' reasoning, rather than on their personal character. (The exception to this is, of course, if you are making an argument about someone's character—if your conclusion is "President Jones is an untrustworthy person," premises about her untrustworthy acts are relevant, not fallacious.)

8.5.9 Appeal to pity

Definition: The appeal to pity takes place when an arguer tries to get people to accept a conclusion by making them feel sorry for someone.

Examples: "I know the exam is graded based on performance, but you should give me an A. My cat has been sick, my car broke down, and I've had a cold, so it was really hard for me to study!" The conclusion here is "You should give me an A." But the criteria for getting an A have

to do with learning and applying the material from the course; the principle the arguer wants us to accept (people who have a hard week deserve A's) is clearly unacceptable. The information the arguer has given might *feel* relevant and might even get the audience to consider the conclusion—but the information isn't logically relevant, and so the argument is fallacious. Here's another example: "It's wrong to tax corporations—think of all the money they give to charity, and of the costs they already pay to run their businesses!"

Tip: Make sure that you aren't simply trying to get your audience to agree with you by making them feel sorry for someone.

8.5.10   Appeal to ignorance

Definition: In the appeal to ignorance, the arguer basically says, "Look, there's no conclusive evidence on the issue at hand. Therefore, you should accept my conclusion on this issue."

Example: "People have been trying for centuries to prove that God exists. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God does not exist." Here's an opposing argument that commits the same fallacy: "People have been trying for years to prove that God does not exist. But no one has yet been able to prove it. Therefore, God exists." In each case, the arguer tries to use the lack of evidence as support for a positive claim about the truth of a conclusion. There is one situation in which doing this is not fallacious: if qualified researchers have used well-thought-out methods to search for something for a long time, they haven't found it, and it's the kind of thing people ought to be able to find, then the fact that they haven't found it constitutes some evidence that it doesn't exist.

Tip: Look closely at arguments where you point out a lack of evidence and then draw a conclusion from that lack of evidence.

8.5.11   *Straw man*

Definition: One way of making our own arguments stronger is to anticipate and respond in advance to the arguments that an opponent might make. In the straw man fallacy, the arguer sets up a weak version of the opponent's position and tries to score points by knocking it down. But just as being able to knock down a straw man (like a scarecrow) isn't very impressive, defeating a watered-down version of your opponent's argument isn't very impressive either.

Example: "Feminists want to ban all pornography and punish everyone who looks at it! But such harsh measures are surely inappropriate, so the feminists are wrong: porn and its fans should be left in peace." The feminist argument is made weak by being overstated. In fact, most feminists do not propose an outright "ban" on porn or any punishment for those who merely view it or approve of it; often, they propose some restrictions on particular things like child porn, or propose to allow people who are hurt by porn to sue publishers and producers—not viewers— for damages. So the arguer hasn't really scored any points; he or she has just committed a fallacy.

Tip: Be charitable to your opponents. State their arguments as strongly, accurately, and sympathetically as possible. If you can knock down even the best version of an opponent's argument, then you've really accomplished something.

8.5.12   *Red herring*

Definition: Partway through an argument, the arguer goes off on a tangent, raising a side issue that distracts the audience from what's really at stake. Often, the arguer never returns to the original issue.

Example: "Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do. After all, classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well." Let's try our premise-conclusion outlining to see what's wrong with this argument:

Premise: Classes go more smoothly when the students and the professor are getting along well.

Conclusion: Grading this exam on a curve would be the most fair thing to do.

When we lay it out this way, it's pretty obvious that the arguer went off on a tangent—the fact that something helps people get along doesn't necessarily make it more fair; fairness and justice sometimes require us to do things that cause conflict. But the audience may feel like the issue of teachers and students agreeing is important and be distracted from the fact that the arguer has not given any evidence as to why a curve would be fair.

Tip: Try laying your premises and conclusion out in an outline-like form. How many issues do you see being raised in your argument? Can you explain how each premise supports the conclusion?

8.5.13   False dichotomy

Definition: In false dichotomy, the arguer sets up the situation so it looks like there are only two choices. The arguer then eliminates one of the choices, so it seems that we are left with only one option: the one the arguer wanted us to pick in the first place. But often there are really many different options, not just two—and if we thought about them all, we might not be so quick to pick the one the arguer recommends.

Example: "Caldwell Hall is in bad shape. Either we tear it down and put up a new building, or we continue to risk students' safety. Obviously we shouldn't risk anyone's safety, so we must tear the building down." The argument neglects to mention the possibility that we might repair the building or find some way to protect students from the risks in question—for example, if only a few rooms are in bad shape, perhaps we shouldn't hold classes in those rooms.

Tip: Examine your own arguments: if you're saying that we have to choose between just two options, is that really so? Or are there other alternatives you haven't mentioned? If there are other alternatives, don't just ignore them—explain why they, too, should be ruled out. Although

there's no formal name for it, assuming that there are only three options, four options, etc. when really there are more is similar to false dichotomy and should also be avoided.

8.5.14 *Begging the question*

Definition: A complicated fallacy; it comes in several forms and can be harder to detect than many of the other fallacies we've discussed. Basically, an argument that begs the question asks the reader to simply accept the conclusion without providing real evidence; the argument either relies on a premise that says the same thing as the conclusion (which you might hear referred to as "being circular" or "circular reasoning"), or simply ignores an important (but questionable) assumption that the argument rests on. Sometimes people use the phrase "beg the question" as a sort of general criticism of arguments, to mean that an arguer hasn't given very good reasons for a conclusion, but that's not the meaning we're going to discuss here.

Examples: "Active euthanasia is morally acceptable. It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death." Let's lay this out in premise-conclusion form:

Premise: It is a decent, ethical thing to help another human being escape suffering through death.

Conclusion: Active euthanasia is morally acceptable.

If we "translate" the premise, we'll see that the arguer has really just said the same thing twice: "decent, ethical" means pretty much the same thing as "morally acceptable," and "help another human being escape suffering through death" means something pretty similar to "active euthanasia." So the premise basically says, "active euthanasia is morally acceptable," just like the conclusion does. The arguer hasn't yet given us any real reasons *why* euthanasia is acceptable; instead, she has left us asking "well, really, why do you think active euthanasia is acceptable?" Her argument "begs" (that is, evades) the real question.

Here's a second example of begging the question, in which a dubious premise which is needed to make the argument valid is completely ignored: "Murder is morally wrong. So active euthanasia is morally wrong." The premise that gets left out is "active euthanasia is murder." And that is a debatable premise—again, the argument "begs" or evades the question of whether active euthanasia is murder by simply not stating the premise. The arguer is hoping we'll just focus on the uncontroversial premise, "Murder is morally wrong," and not notice what is being assumed.

Tip: One way to try to avoid begging the question is to write out your premises and conclusion in a short, outline-like form. See if you notice any gaps, any steps that are required to move from one premise to the next or from the premises to the conclusion. Write down the statements that would fill those gaps. If the statements are controversial and you've just glossed over them, you might be begging the question. Next, check to see whether any of your premises basically says the same thing as the conclusion (but in different words). If so, you're probably begging the question. The moral of the story: you can't just assume or use as uncontroversial evidence the very thing you're trying to prove.

8.5.15   Equivocation

Definition: Equivocation is sliding between two or more different meanings of a single word or phrase that is important to the argument.

Example: "Giving money to charity is the right thing to do. So charities have a right to our money." The equivocation here is on the word "right": "right" can mean both something that is correct or good (as in "I got the right answers on the test") and something to which someone has a claim (as in "everyone has a right to life"). Sometimes an arguer will deliberately, sneakily equivocate, often on words like "freedom," "justice," "rights," and so forth; other times, the equivocation is a mistake or misunderstanding. Either way, it's important that you use the main terms of your argument consistently.

Tip: Identify the most important words and phrases in your argument and ask yourself whether they could have more than one meaning. If they could, be sure you aren't slipping and sliding between those meanings.

8.6 Plagiarism

This section contains statements from the Council of Writing Program Administrators and from other online writing guides such as the Purdue Online Writing Lab.

Plagiarism has always concerned teachers and administrators, who want students' work to represent their own efforts and to reflect the outcomes of their learning. However, with the advent of the Internet and easy access to almost limitless written material on every conceivable topic, suspicion of student plagiarism has begun to affect teachers at all levels, at times diverting them from the work of developing students' writing, reading, and critical thinking abilities.

This statement responds to the growing educational concerns about plagiarism in four ways: by defining plagiarism; by suggesting some of the causes of plagiarism; by proposing a set of responsibilities (for students, teachers, and administrators) to address the problem of plagiarism; and by recommending a set of practices for teaching and learning that can significantly reduce the likelihood of plagiarism. The statement is intended to provide helpful suggestions and clarifications so that instructors, administrators, and students can work together more effectively in support of excellence in teaching and learning.

8.6.1 What Is Plagiarism?

In instructional settings, plagiarism is a multifaceted and ethically complex problem. However, if any definition of plagiarism is to be helpful to administrators, faculty, and students, it needs to be as simple and direct as possible within the context for which it is intended.

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.

This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers.

Most current discussions of plagiarism fail to distinguish between:

1. submitting someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source, and

2. carelessly or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source.

Such discussions conflate *plagiarism* with the *misuse of sources.*

Ethical writers make every effort to acknowledge sources fully and appropriately in accordance with the contexts and genres of their writing. A student who attempts (even if clumsily) to identify and credit his or her source, but who misuses a specific citation format or incorrectly uses quotation marks or other forms of identifying material taken from other sources, has not plagiarized. Instead, such a student should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources appropriately.

8.6.2 What are the Causes of Plagiarism and the Failure to Use and Document Sources Appropriately?

Students who are fully aware that their actions constitute plagiarism—for example, copying published information into a paper without source attribution for the purpose of claiming the information as their own, or turning in material written by another student—are guilty of academic misconduct. Although no excuse will lessen the breach of ethical conduct that such behavior represents, understanding why students plagiarize can help teachers to consider how to reduce the opportunities for plagiarism in their classrooms.

- Students may fear failure or fear taking risks in their own work.

- Students may have poor time-management skills or they may plan poorly for the time and effort required for research-based writing, and believe they have no choice but to plagiarize.

- Students may view the course, the assignment, the conventions of academic documentation, or the consequences of cheating as unimportant.

- Teachers may present students with assignments so generic or unparticularized that students may believe they are justified in looking for canned responses.

- Instructors and institutions may fail to report cheating when it does occur, or may not enforce appropriate penalties.

Students are not guilty of plagiarism when they try in good faith to acknowledge others' work but fail to do so accurately or fully. These failures are largely the result of failures in prior teaching and learning: students lack the knowledge of and ability to use the conventions of authorial attribution. The following conditions and practices may result in texts that falsely appear to represent plagiarism as we have defined it:

- Students may not know how to integrate the ideas of others and document the sources of those ideas appropriately in their texts.

- Students will make mistakes as they learn how to integrate others' words or ideas into their own work because error is a natural part of learning.

- Students may not know how to take careful and fully documented notes during their research.

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- Academicians and scholars may define plagiarism differently or more stringently than have instructors or administrators in students' earlier education or in other writing situations.

- College instructors may assume that students have already learned appropriate academic conventions of research and documentation.

- College instructors may not support students as they attempt to learn how to research and document sources; instead, instructors may assign writing that requires research and expect its appropriate documentation, yet fail to appreciate the difficulty of novice academic writers to execute these tasks successfully.

- Students from other cultures may not be familiar with the conventions governing attribution and plagiarism in American colleges and universities.

- In some settings, using other people's words or ideas as their own is an acceptable practice for writers of certain kinds of texts (for example, organizational documents), making the concepts of plagiarism and documentation less clear cut than academics often acknowledge and thereby confusing students who have not learned that the conventions of source attribution vary in different contexts.

8.6.3 What are our Shared Responsibilities?

When assignments are highly generic and not classroom-specific, when there is no instruction on plagiarism and appropriate source attribution, and when students are not led through the iterative processes of writing and revising, teachers often find themselves playing an adversarial role as "plagiarism police" instead of a coaching role as educators. Just as students must live up to their responsibility to behave ethically and honestly as learners, teachers must recognize that they can encourage or discourage plagiarism not just by policy and admonition, but also in the

way they structure assignments and in the processes they use to help students define and gain interest in topics developed for papers and projects.

Students should understand research assignments as opportunities for genuine and rigorous inquiry and learning. Such an understanding involves:

- Assembling and analyzing a set of sources that they have themselves determined are relevant to the issues they are investigating;

- Acknowledging clearly when and how they are drawing on the ideas or phrasings of others;

- Learning the conventions for citing documents and acknowledging sources appropriate to the field they are studying;

- Consulting their instructors when they are unsure about how to acknowledge the contributions of others to their thought and writing.

Faculty need to design contexts and assignments for learning that encourage students not simply to recycle information but to investigate and analyze its sources. This includes:

- Building support for researched writing (such as the analysis of models, individual/group conferences, or peer review) into course designs;

- Stating in writing their policies and expectations for documenting sources and avoiding plagiarism;

- Teaching students the conventions for citing documents and acknowledging sources in their field, and allowing students to practice these skills;

- Avoiding the use of recycled or formulaic assignments that may invite stock or plagiarized responses;

- Engaging students in the process of writing, which produces materials such as notes, drafts, and revisions that are difficult to plagiarize;

- Discussing problems students may encounter in documenting and analyzing sources, and offering strategies for avoiding or solving those problems;

- Discussing papers suspected of plagiarism with the students who have turned them in, to determine if the papers are the result of a deliberate intent to deceive;

- Reporting possible cases of plagiarism to appropriate administrators or review boards.

Administrators need to foster a program- or campus-wide climate that values academic honesty. This involves:

- Publicizing policies and expectations for conducting ethical research, as well as procedures for investigating possible cases of academic dishonesty and its penalties;

- Providing support services (for example, writing centers or Web pages) for students who have questions about how to cite sources;

- Supporting faculty and student discussions of issues concerning academic honesty, research ethics, and plagiarism;

- Recognizing and improving upon working conditions, such as high teacher-student ratios, that reduce opportunities for more individualized instruction and increase the need to handle papers and assignments too quickly and mechanically;

- Providing faculty development opportunities for instructors to reflect on and, if appropriate, change the ways they work with writing in their courses.

There are some actions that can almost unquestionably be labeled plagiarism. Some of these include **buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper** (including, of course, copying an entire paper

or article from the Web); **hiring someone to write your paper** for you; and **copying large sections of text** from a source without quotation marks or proper citation.

But then there are actions that are usually in more of a gray area. Some of these include using the words of a source too closely when paraphrasing (where quotation marks should have been used) or building on someone's ideas without citing their spoken or written work. Sometimes teachers suspecting students of plagiarism will consider the students' intent, and whether it appeared the student was deliberately trying to make ideas of others appear to be his or her own.

However, other teachers and administrators may not distinguish between deliberate and accidental plagiarism. So let's look at some strategies for avoiding even suspicion of plagiarism in the first place

8.6.4 When do we give credit?

The key to avoiding plagiarism is to make sure you give credit where it is due. This may be credit for something somebody said, wrote, emailed, drew, or implied. Many professional organizations, including the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA), have lengthy guidelines for citing sources. However, students are often so busy trying to learn the rules of MLA format and style or APA format and style that they sometimes forget exactly what needs to be credited. Here, then, is **a brief list of what needs to be credited or documented**:

- Words or ideas presented in a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium

- Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person, face to face, over the phone, or in writing

- When you copy the exact words or a unique phrase

- When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials

- When you reuse or repost any electronically-available media, including images, audio, video, or other media

Bottom line, document any words, ideas, or other productions that originate somewhere outside of you.

There are, of course, certain things that do not need documentation or credit, including:

- Writing your own lived experiences, your own observations and insights, your own thoughts, and your own conclusions about a subject

- When you are writing up your own results obtained through lab or field experiments

- When you use your own artwork, digital photographs, video, audio, etc.

- When you are using "common knowledge," things like folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, and historical events (but **not** historical documents)

- When you are using generally-accepted facts, e.g., pollution is bad for the environment, including facts that are accepted within particular discourse communities, e.g., in the field of composition studies, "writing is a process" is a generally-accepted fact.

8.6.5 Deciding if something is "common knowledge"

Generally speaking, you can regard something as common knowledge if you find the same information undocumented in at least five credible sources. Additionally, it might be common knowledge if you think the information you're presenting is something your readers will already know, or something that a person could easily find in general reference sources. But when in doubt, cite; if the citation turns out to be unnecessary, your teacher or editor will tell you.

8.6.6 Safe Best Practices

Most students, of course, don't intend to plagiarize. In fact, most realize that citing sources actually builds their credibility for an audience and even helps writers to better grasp information relevant to a topic or course of study. Mistakes in citation and crediting can still happen, so here are certain practices that can help you not only avoid plagiarism, but even improve the efficiency and organization of your research and writing.

8.6.6.1   Reading and note-taking

- In your notes, always mark someone else's words with a big **Q**, for quote, or use big quotation marks

- Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources with a big **S**, and which are your own insights (**ME**)

- When information comes from sources, record relevant documentation in your notes (book and article titles; URLs on the Web)

8.6.6.2   Interviewing and conversing

- Take lots of thorough notes; if you have any of your own thoughts as you're interviewing, mark them clearly

- If your subject will allow you to record the conversation or interview (and you have proper clearance to do so through an Institutional Review Board, or IRB), place your recording device in an optimal location between you and the speaker so you can hear clearly when you review the recordings. Test your equipment, and bring plenty of backup batteries and media.

- If you're interviewing via email, retain copies of the interview subject's emails as well as the ones you send in reply

- Make any additional, clarifying notes immediately after the interview has concluded

8.6.6.3   Writing paraphrases or summaries

- Use a statement that credits the source somewhere in the paraphrase or summary, e.g., According to Jonathan Kozol, ...).

- If you're having trouble summarizing, try writing your paraphrase or summary of a text without looking at the original, relying only on your memory and notes

- Check your paraphrase or summary against the original text; correct any errors in content accuracy, and be sure to use quotation marks to set off any exact phrases from the original text

- Check your paraphrase or summary against sentence and paragraph structure, as copying those is also considered plagiarism.

- Put quotation marks around any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change: e.g., "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).

8.6.6.4   Writing direct quotations

- Keep the source author's name in the same sentence as the quote

- Mark the quote with quotation marks, or set it off from your text in its own block, per the style guide your paper follows

- Quote no more material than is necessary; if a short phrase from a source will suffice, don't quote an entire paragraph

- To shorten quotes by removing extra information, use ellipsis points (...) to indicate omitted text, keeping in mind that:

  o   In longer quotes where you have omitted a sentence in between other complete sentences, maintain terminal puncutation in between the ellipses.

- o **Example:** "None of the national reports I saw made even passing references to inequality or segregation. . . . Booker T. Washington was cited with increasing frequency, Du Bois never, and Martin Luther King only with cautious selectivity." (Kozol 3).

- To give context to a quote or otherwise add wording to it, place added words in brackets, ([]); be careful not to editorialize or make any additions that skew the original meaning of the quote—do that in your main text, e.g.,

  - o **OK**: Kozol claims there are "savage inequalities" in our educational system, which is obvious.

  - o **WRONG**: Kozol claims there are "[obvious] savage inequalities" in our educational system.

- Use quotes that will have the most rhetorical, argumentative impact in your paper; too many direct quotes from sources may weaken your credibility, as though you have nothing to say yourself, and will certainly interfere with your style

8.6.6.5 Writing about another's ideas

- Note the name of the idea's originator in the sentence or throughout a paragraph about the idea

- Use parenthetical citations, footnotes, or endnotes to refer readers to additional sources about the idea, as necessary

- Be sure to use quotation marks around key phrases or words that the idea's originator used to describe the idea

8.6.6.6 Maintaining drafts of your paper

Sometimes innocent, hard-working students are accused of plagiarism because a dishonest student steals their work. This can happen in all kinds of ways, from a roommate copying files off of your computer, to someone finding files on a disk or on a pen drive left in a computer lab. Here are some practices to keep your own intellectual property safe:

- Do not save your paper in the same file over and over again; use a numbering system and the Save As... function; E.g., you might have research_paper001.doc, research_paper002.doc, research_paper003.doc as you progress. Do the same thing for any HTML files you're writing for the Web. Having multiple draft versions may help prove that the work is yours (assuming you are being ethical in how you cite ideas in your work!).

- Maintain copies of your drafts in numerous media, and different secure locations when possible; don't just rely on your hard drive, pen drive, or the cloud.

- Password-protect your computer; if you have to leave a computer lab for a quick bathroom break, hold down the Windows key and L to lock your computer without logging out.

- Password-protect your files; this is possible in all sorts of programs, from Adobe Acrobat to Microsoft word (just be sure not to forget the password!).

8.6.6.7 Revising, proofreading, and finalizing your paper

- Proofread and cross-check with your notes and sources to make sure that anything coming from an outside source is acknowledged in some combination of the following ways:

  o In-text citation, otherwise known as parenthetical citation

- o Footnotes or endnotes

- o Bibliography, References, or Works Cited pages

- o Quotation marks around short quotes; longer quotes set off by themselves, as prescribed by a research and citation style guide

- o Indirect quotations: citing a source that cites another source

- o If you have any questions about citation, ask your instructor **well in advance** of your paper's due date, so if you have to make any adjustments to your citations, you have the time to do them well

8.7 Starting and Completing the Thesis

(This section contains excerpts from Howard Becker's "Writing for Social Scientists.")

8.7.1 Basic Writing Skills

Graduate students, even those pursuing doctoral degrees, show poor writing skills. They also demonstrate poor writing habits and rituals that they themselves have difficulty explaining. Often they write at the mercy of moods, whims and other incalculable forces, using what they consider to be magical methods that they mistakenly think works for them. They don't act rationally because they are afraid they cannot organize their thoughts, that writing would be a big, confusing chaos that would drive them mad. They fear that they might be "wrong" and people would laugh at them. They don't realize that the bulk of writing involves editing and rewriting (8-10 times before submission or publication). Researchers habitually use twenty words where two will do. They need to ask, with pen poised over a word or clause, "Does this need to be here?" If not, it should be deleted without losing the slightest nuance of the author's thought. Authors do so to give substance and weight to what they wrote by sounding academic, even at the expense of their real meaning. They write using meaningless expressions in order to

cover up their problems or to avoid telling who's doing what. Instead, they will use "larger social forces" or "inexorable social processes" rather than the real concrete subject for a sentence. Avoiding saying who did it produces the habitual use of passive constructions and abstract nouns. If you say, for example, that "deviants were labeled," you don't have to say who labeled them. That is a theoretical error not just bad writing, since the labeling theory of deviance requires someone that labels the person deviant. Yet this is common locution.

They are unwilling to make causal statements even though those are what's interesting. Instead they write "There is a tendency for them to covary" instead of boldly saying "I think A causes B and my data support that by showing that they covary." They want to discover causes but don't want the philosophical responsibility. Or as Wayne Booth's criticism of academic "Greek-fed, polysyllabic bullshit," vague phrases expressing a general readiness to abandon the point being made if anyone objects. The non-specific ritual qualifier gives them an all-purpose loophole. If attacked, they could say they never said it was always true. Bullshit qualifications, making your statements fuzzy, ignore the philosophical and methodological tradition which holds that that making a generalization in a strong universal form identifies negative evidence which can be used to improve them.

Many of these habits come from undergraduate writing born of the 'term paper." There only one draft is necessary after making an outline, and it's either OK or it's not. This method works for undergraduates. Some become adept at it and turn out credible polished works, but most don't. Students who habitually work that way understandably worry about the draft, whereas for graduate writing, the first draft is only meant to put ideas down and is often thrown away. Graduate students also write longer papers and students used to writing one-shot term papers cannot hold a longer paper in their heads so easily, and as a result, they lose their ability to write. Paper reviewers often are disappointed with the quality of the papers they are reviewing, how much work there was to do and how many silly mistakes people. Ironically, authors have

the same reaction to reviewers, complaining about how lacking in compassion reviewers are and how they couldn't see what the authors' meant. They are both essentially talking about themselves.

Ineffective writers merely "express" themselves by offering up an unretouched and under-processed version of their own thought, using the "think it/write it" model. The results can range from a mere missing referent or an underdeveloped idea to an unfocused and apparently pointless discussion. Instead of using this "writer-based" prose, authors should be applying the "reader-based" prose to create a shared language and shared context. Reader-based prose reflects the *purpose* of the writer's thought; writer-based prose tends to reflect its *process*. Good writing, therefore, is often the cognitively demanding transformation of the natural but private expressions of writer-based thought into a structure and style adapted to a reader. The egocentric writer-based prose is just like the way children carry on spirited elliptical monologues which they seemed to assume others understood, but which in fact made no concessions to the needs of the listener. In this mode, the writer takes no interest in his interlocutor, does not try to communicate, expects no answers, and often does not even care whether anyone listens to him. Good writers work circuitously to share the ideas with the reader, making decision in stages as to which idea to take up, what words to use, in what order, to express it, what examples to give to make our meaning clearer, absorbing and expressing those ideas.

Writing the rough draft actually shows that decisions were already made before even the first word is written. You see what you have and what you don't have, and what you have done and what you already know, and what is left to do. The only job left is to make it all clearer. It's not that easy of course. The next choices, made in editing and rewriting, also shape the final product. Early stages of writing lead writers to see what they will have to do in the later stages.

8.7.2 Academic Persona and Authority

Researchers often write in a way that reflects their academic tone. They feel that their writing has to be "classy," "sophisticated," or "authoritative" and to do so might mean using words people don't understand. So instead of writing "agreement" they use "unified stance"; instead of "talked about" they use "confronted the issue" and instead of "this Section will show that independent incomes change the way husbands and wives handle financial affairs" they write "This Section will examine the impact of money or, more specifically, independent incomes on relations between husbands and wives with particular regard to the realm of financial affairs." Supposedly the arcane vocabulary and syntax of stereotypical academic prose clearly distinguish lay people from professional intellectuals. Sounding smart means writing to sound like a certain kind of person. As Mills noted, to overcome this academic prose, you have first to overcome the academic pose. These writers adopt personae which emphasize their esoteric expertise, to be the kind of people who knows "inside stuff" ordinary folks will have to struggle or wait to read about in next week's newspaper.

Good writers take a Will Rogers approach where we are just plain folks who emphasize our similarity to ordinary people, rather than the differences. We may know a few things others don't but it's nothing special: "It's just that I had the time or took the trouble to be there, and you didn't or couldn't, but let me tell you about it." Such writers use their similarity to others, their ordinariness, to persuade readers that what they are saying is right. They write more informally, favor the personal pronoun, and appeal to what we-and-the-reader know in common rather than what we know and the reader doesn't. Every style, then, is the voice of someone the author wants to be, or be taken for.

8.7.3 No One Right Way

Scholarly writers have to organize their material, express an argument clearly enough that readers can follow the reasoning and accept the conclusions. They make this job harder than it

need be when they think that there is only one right way to do it, that each paper has a preordained structure they must find. They simplify their work, on the other hand, when they recognize that there are many effective ways to say something and that their job is only to choose one and execute it so that readers will know what they are doing. This is the whole point of rewriting.

Students, being young, simply don't have the experience of life that would let them use their imaginations to get out of their own egocentric worlds. They thus cannot imagine an audience's response or the possibility of a text other than the one they already produced. The messy process of producing the published work is hidden from students, so they have no idea of the amount of work involved. Students believe real writers get it right the first time. All these ideas rest on the fallacious premise that there is a "right answer" or a "best way" to do things. There is never one right answer, just a lot of provisional answers competing for attention and acceptance. Whatever you do will be a compromise between conflicting possibilities. Many writers have trouble getting started because again and again they find each successive try unsatisfactory in some new way. They set themselves up to fail. That is why people use outlines, working on the whole puzzle to see where they are going, hoping to find the one right way. Outlines can help, but not if you begin with them. If you begin instead by writing down everything that comes into your head, as fast as you can type, without reference to outlines, notes, data, books or any other aids. The object is to find out what you would like to say, what all the earlier work on the topic or project has already led you to believe. If you do this, you will find that you do not have the bewildering variety of choices you feared.

Once you have the fragments, you can see how disparate they are, how they range from the general to the particular and don't seem to stick to any one way of thinking about your topic. Now you have to arrange them so that they at least seem to move logically from point to point in what a reader would recognize as a reasonable argument. People solve this problem in a

variety of ways. Do whatever is easiest first. Write the part that is easiest to write, do simple housekeeping chores like sorting your papers out. Begin by taking notes on what you have written, putting each idea on a file card. Don't discard any of the ideas in your draft. They may come in handy, even if you can't see how at the moment; your subconscious knows things you don't. Put the ideas that seem to go together in one set. Follow your intuition. Take out the ones that don't fit and make new piles for them. You will soon see that there is more than one way to make your case and explain what it all means. If you can't find the way to organize the ideas, talk about why you can't. Demonstrate those problems by writing about them. Make them the focus of your analysis. Taking readers into your confidence about your troubles requires admitting that you had them, and therefore you are not the paragon who always knows the right way and executes it flawlessly.

8.7.4 Editing and Revising

Other than what's already explained in this and previous Sections, there are no standard rules for editing and revising. There are always exceptions and we get to decide which rule should be followed in crafting a creating piece. Use what "sounds good" or "looks good," use heuristics, not fixed algorithms. Consider your standard of taste, some generalized notion of what something ought to look like or sound like. Most good writers rely on fallible and uninspected judgment of their ear. They develop that ear, their standards of prose, mainly from what they read. They read work they admire and want what they write to resemble it, to look that way on the page. Consider the following sentences:

> ➤ #It is important to make its steps explicit, so that …..

Don't talk about it (metadiscourse), *do it*!

> ➤ We need to make its steps explicit so that ….

> ➤ #The theory is a simple one, but it is important to make its steps explicit, so that we can see how it works. The theory is that …

Rearrange to make it brief and to the point.

> ➤ We need to make the steps of this simple theory explicit …

> ➤ #Someone who has managed to maintain their human dignity in the face of trouble will have a face that shows that ….

Consider different ways to edit one or more sentences to make the imagery more concrete

> ➤ People who have kept their dignity …..

But the context shows that keeping their dignity wasn't the focus of the passage, so it could be completely deleted and the sentence could be rewritten.

> ➤ Experiences of life as recorded in their faces

Such detailed editing is worth doing. They can see that each change makes things marginally clearer and cuts out a few words that probably weren't doing much work anyway. Like a camera's lens, good editing brings everything into perfect focus. Unnecessary words take up room and are therefore uneconomic. They cheat, demanding attention by hinting at profundities and sophistication they don't contain. Seeming to mean something, those extra words mislead readers about what is being said. Here are some heuristics:

8.7.4.1 Active/passive

Substitute active verbs for passive verbs when you can. This simple act of putting the crucial actions into verbs and making some important character in the story you are telling the subject forces you to name the person, and makes our research more understandable and believable.

8.7.4.2 Fewer words

Academic writers insert words when they don't want to say something as flatly as it first came to them. They want to indicate a sense of modesty, a reservation, before actually saying whatever they are going to say, as though it merited attention. They write "it is important" despite knowing that if it isn't important, why are they writing it? And if it is, won't doing it make that clear enough without a preliminary announcement? We use unnecessary words because we think if we say it plainly it will sound like something anybody could say rather than a profound statement only a scientist could say. But studying the context might suggest that whatever we wrote has little to do with the goal of the paper and is therefore distracting and pointless to mention. Deleting the sentence or part of the sentence will remove the distracting reference. An unnecessary word does not work. It doesn't further an argument, state an important qualification, or add a compelling detail.

8.7.4.3 Repetition

Academic writers create some of their most impenetrable obscurities by trying to be clear. They repeat words and phrases if there is any possibility of confusion. That may not confuse readers but it usually bores them. You may have to repeat words, but you shouldn't repeat words when you can get the same result without doing it.

8.7.4.4 Structure/content

Thoughts conveyed in a sentence usually have a logical structure, stating or implying some sort of connection between the things it discusses: "A mental hospital is a total institution." We might want to describe an identifying characteristic: "People who move from the country are marginal to the urban society they enter." We might want to state a causal connection or an if-then relation: "Slums produce crime." That will be enough to make our point clear. But we can be even clearer by reinforcing the point syntactically, by arranging the elements so that its syntax

also makes the argument. Put subordinate thoughts in subordinate positions in the sentence. Make our point more forcefully by going from one to the next in a way that shows how they are connected other than by following one another in a list.

8.7.4.5   Concrete/abstract

Academic writers use far too many abstract words, sometimes because they don't have anything specific in mind or sometimes because they mark a place that needs a real idea. We say that there is a complex relation between two things. What have we said? "Relation" is such a general concept that it means almost nothing, which is why it is so useful in research. Almost any two things are related, we usually want to know *how*. We fail to realize that in order to generalize the details needs to be clarified, otherwise the generalization also becomes meaningless. Concrete details make the mater more alive to the reader. When we squeeze long, windy phrases into more compact phrases, we make diffuse ideas sharply specific.

8.7.4.6   Metaphors

In almost all journal articles, we can find trite metaphorical talk: "Some cutting edge seems lacking," "covers a huge terrain," "a rich issue that has been impoverished by its context," "growing body of literature," analysis that "penetrates the heart," or find the "seeds planted in our own society," "conceptual straitjacket." We need to carefully choose metaphors that take their subject seriously and delete out those that do not. Good writers use their metaphors to discover and describe the topic of their paper. The metaphor validates itself by being serious about its ramifications. When we say that an argument has a "cutting edge," what tool are we comparing it to and what material is it supposed to be cutting? Who "covers terrain" in real life, how do they cover it, and what are the problems of terrain covering? Is the literature being compared to a human body? Does that mean we have to look for its heart, its liver, its stomach, its brain? If these details are not spelled out, the comparisons these "tired metaphors" make no longer live

in the minds of those who write or read them. A metaphor that works is still alive. Reading it shows you a new aspect of what you are reading about. Using a metaphor is a serious theoretical exercise in which you assert that two different empirical phenomena belong to the same general class, and general classes always imply a theory. Metaphors work only if they are fresh enough to attract attention.

8.7.5 Handling Perceptions and Risks in Writing

Authors go through a complex set of experiences when they write. The way the author handles these experiences will determine the outcome of their life-long work. Authors are part of a network of other authors and colleagues that they interact with beginning from their first years as a graduate student all through their professional career as researchers. The author feels, suitably so, that she needs to meet the expectations her colleagues have of her. The author feels that her submission needs to be perfect to avoid receiving scathing comments from journal editors and reviewers. Nothing can be more painful for writers than to receive comments like "This nothing but BS," "This is absolutely the stupidest stuff you've ever written," or "This doesn't make any sense." The author feels she has to keep as good a face as possible and receiving these comments makes her feel that she's betrayed or let down all her colleagues.

The author wishes that she could be composing her work flawlessly, her words flowing out of her head, placed perfectly on the page. Instead, she feels like a fraud because the writing isn't really constructed through clear explicit arguments, or that she's not working the way everyone else does. She feels she should be reading the classics as bedtime reading; but she's not doing that. She doesn't read the journals cover to cover, and maybe even feels she doesn't to; how can she be a scholar? She feels that she doesn't qualify as a researcher because she's not keeping up with the works of the Masters. How can she converse meaningfully about the literature on the topic, especially the topic that she is supposedly an expert on, if she doesn't know all the things she ought to know, or do them the way they ought to be done? Worse still,

she knows she has to repeatedly go back to her research to plug the holes and do it right, but she doesn't feel like doing it because she's so tired.

For all these reasons, writing becomes a risk because the author opens herself up to scrutiny. To do that, she has to trust herself and trust her colleagues. Her colleagues' responses make it possible for her to trust herself. Yet, she has dreams of self-doubt and personal attacks by her closest and most trusted colleagues, for that is the nature of academic life. Every piece of work can be used as evidence about the kind of researcher she is. "Hmm, she's not too bright. I could do better than that. She's not so hot after all." The discipline is set up in such a competitive fashion that we assuage our own insecurities by denigrating others, often publicly. There's always a nagging fear that even peers can make offhand comments about us that will become part of our professional image. If those comments are critical or negative, it's dangerous. This makes it very risky to give drafts of anything to peers.

Few people understand what "working drafts" are. They assume the first draft are just one step removed from being sent out for review. They could decide that it's shoddy work, poorly constructed, and really quite sloppy. Their conclusion? That you're not much of a researcher if you pass around such crap. And what if they that to others? Even if they understood what a working draft meant, they are still looking for the stunning idea. What you're asking them to do is to pass judgment on your ability to think. There are times when giving your work to senior colleagues seems even more dangerous than giving it to peers. Say you're an untenured faculty member. What is the political outcome of getting known as a sloppy researcher? They are the ones that feel they have the duty to weed out the bad academics. So how can you trust them not to tell tales when they decide that your work isn't very good?

Trust is important because it undermines the kind of emotional and intellectual freedom that we all need if we are to be creative. There are a few people who are so confident that they don't really worry about what colleagues think. They just charge ahead, dropping off manuscripts left

and right, filling up people's mailboxes with page after page of interesting and useful ideas. Some of them can do this because they have the kind of personality that gives them this ability; others have the structural freedom that gives them the power to say, "I don't give a damn what researchers are 'supposed' to do, I'm doing what I want." It's not necessarily trusting anyone, it's just that I can can be less concerned about the impact of their negative judgments because I've learned what needs to be done.

The first group of people that you can trust are the ones who already realize how stupid you can be. These are people you went to graduate school with and the people who taught you in graduate school. They've seen it all and know that the only one way you can go: up. So you can trust them and incidentally they trust you. These are the bonds that need to be created. Nothing can rival the exhilaration of having someone tell you that those tiny, tentative offerings were *good.* These colleagues are few but precious. Like all friendships, they're the product of those cautious little dance steps that move you close together and then apart, near again, and then farther away, each approach creating a bit more trust and concern. I can trust them to be honest and tell me the truth. I must believe absolutely that if I write crap or think idiotic thoughts they will tell me.

Even so, no one can tell me all those things until I actually do something and write something down. If I have problems starting, I say to myself, "Well, I may not have written about this topic before, but I did write about this or that, and people thought that was acceptable." Or I look far to the future: I call trusted friends and tell them about my work, and they make appropriate comforting noises, so that helps to make me feel strong enough to begin writing. Writing gets easier the more you do it because the more you do it, the more you learn that it's not really as risky as you fear. You have a history on which to draw for self-confidence, you have a believable reputation among a wider number of people whom you can call on the phone. Taking the risk can be worth it and you've done that. As I write more and more, I begin to understand

that it's not all-or-nothing. I'm liable to win a bit and lose a bit. What is written doesn't have to be literary pearls or unmitigated garbage.

8.7.6 Getting It Out the Door

Many things can go wrong as you work on a writing project. Like shipping out a new computer system, there's supposedly this tension between marketing and engineering. Marketing says it's got to go out before the share of the market is lost. Engineering says that with a little more time they can make a better machine: free of bugs, simpler and more elegant. Marketing thinks engineers are impractical cuckoos who would just as soon bankrupt the company by pursuing perfectionist pipe dreams. The marketer's operating standard is that the machine should be "plenty good enough," able to do the job it was designed for. This tension is there in writing papers. We want to get it done but no object ever fully embodies the maker's conception of what it could have been. We think, if I just go over it one more time, I can catch those mistakes and devise even better solutions. Authors get hung up over so many things that the work doesn't go out the door.

Get it out the door. Why can't you finish your thesis? Where is the Section you promised? What's taking so long? However, many masterpieces result from years of patient reworking by people who seem not to care whether the damn things gets done. Many unsavory characters merely publish and produce "just good enough" work for equally unsavory reasons. True, working without caring for what's gotten out the door has its merits. But we need to strike a balance. Instead of moralizing, we should see the problem in relation to the social organization of academic life. Thus, we can explain that we took a particular job because "we needed the money," or publish in unflattering journals to "get a raise" or saddest of all, "to get tenure." Instead, scholars who do get things done in a reasonable time find that their reasons in "to contribute to science," "to take part in the scholarly dialogue," or because "writing is fun." These

reasons sound unbelievable, but realizing that academic life evokes and rewards both types of motives.

The scholarly world works in a certain way. On the practical side, world of scholarship is oriented towards getting work done. Less practically, scholars take a long view of history, towards the development of a body of practice and knowledge. They may not have to produce that perfect computer system to keep a share of the market, but they give birth to professional associations, which have annual meetings and publish journals, which in turn require people to write papers for oral delivery and publication. The scholarly worlds provide the pool of labor which staffs university departments and teaches their courses, produce textbooks from which those courses are taught and give interviews to newspapers, testify to legislatures on issues the discipline is supposed to know enough to talk about. Most of these require that someone get some writing done, some product out the door. The discipline does not require any particular person to do it. If I don't write a book on the subject, you will; if not you, someone else. If we don't get work out the door, we may suffer, but the field will not, because someone will eventually write it, and they will get promoted while we continue to teach introductory courses.

Some people copy what appears in their major journals and use them as exemplars. If you can master the form, it helps in writing too. But the scholarly world is also oriented towards the long run and in that mode, it does not need more of the same. It needs new ideas and the old formats make it hard for a different idea to get a breath. For the discipline as a whole, this is a good thing, but individuals may suffer by virtue of the world's jobs they take on. If you take twenty years to write a book which then turns out not to be a major intellectual event, you will certainly suffer. But if enough people try it, the discipline will benefit, but we must realize the risks involved.

It is not always the case that taking more time is necessarily better than taking less time. The authors of the great masterpieces of Victorian fiction—Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot—wrote them

under the conditions of pulp-magazine writing, as Sections of serials that might not even get finished if the early numbers had not sold. Equating time and quality may in fact be false. The more we think about it, the more we may introduce irrelevant considerations and inappropriate qualifications. So relax and do it! You cannot overcome the fear without doing the thing you are afraid of and finding out that it is not as dangerous as you imagined.

8.8 Managing the Dissertation Process

(This section contains excerpts from Davis and Parker's "Writing the Doctoral Dissertation.")

8.8.1 Two Case Studies

The following two case studies reflect the activities of real students to illustrate two extremes. The first illustrates the consequences of an unmanaged approach, while the other, the advantages of a systematic approach to completing the dissertation. In the first case study, James completed the course work with satisfactory grades and passed the qualifying examinations of the doctoral program. After some time, he selected a dissertation topic area in which he had an interest and began collecting data by an interview method. At the same time, he interviewed to take a position with a university. He seemed to be making progress, but he never prepared a dissertation proposal or a plan for completion. His committee was more or less unaware of the scope of the intended dissertation. They had only a general idea based on his oral comments. There were no meetings of the full committee to discuss his dissertation project. Time passed quickly, and when it was time for him to begin work at the university he accepted a position, there was still no proposal or outline for the committee. James thought he would have enough time for dissertation work while teaching just as he had when he was a graduate student.

However, he did not anticipate the change of status that came with the work. He now had to teach courses which he had not taught before, so there was much preparation. There were

committee meetings, students to advise, and university functions to attend. There was a new home to buy, move into and care for. His family had grown and his wife needed more of his help. James thought that after his qualifying examinations, all he needed to do was write the "big paper." Neither he or his wife was prepared for the scope of the dissertation work and the difficulty of completing it. And months went on with no visible progress.

At the end of the second year, the Dean told James there would be consequences if he did not complete the dissertation. He began to feel the pressures for completion. He began to work nights and insist that he could not go on vacations. During those late nights, he had about four hours. But by the time he got the material arranged and got himself into the proper frame of mind, the actual effective time spent was very low. He was tired and his mind wasn't alert. Eventually his five year limit for completing the dissertation was about to expire and he would be terminated as a graduate student. James decided to leave his family and work at the university full time on the thesis. He had to ask for an extension from the university. He did less for the dissertation than he planned but managed to complete it.

In the second case study, Ted had an intuitive feeling for how to manage a doctoral dissertation. He selected the general area early and structured much of his course work to provide support for it. The papers he wrote for these courses were, in reality, background investigations for the dissertation. He was able to make contacts with professors who were interested in the area that he intended to research. He was able to discuss research methodology and ideas for research that were directly related to his research with these professors. In the research methodology course, he planned his research design specifically. In a psychology course, he did a paper related to a particular aspect of his research problem. Even though he did not decide on a topic for his dissertation, he knew the general area and was able to work effectively at getting background information, complete a preliminary literature review, develop a research design and test ideas for a possible topic.

After passing the qualifying exam, a dissertation committee was appointed. The committee consists of professors who knew him and were interested in the general area. Ted refined the dissertation proposal until the document clearly defined what he intended to do. In formal meetings with the committee they encouraged him and sharpened the proposal because they could see the progress he was making. The final proposal, clear and concise, was approved. Ted prepared a time schedule he felt was realistic and followed it as closely as possible. Not everything went as planned, but he was able to estimate quite closely when he was ready for the dissertation defense. At the university where accepted employment, Ten began working immediately in his full professorial role. He began serving in committees and participating in professional activities that was related to his area of expertise. There was no need to decline social activities with the excuse that "I have to work on my dissertation" because he budgeted time to complete his writing early every morning, guided by his mantra posted on the wall in his room, "How many pages have you written today?" He had learned to enjoy scholarly work and it was evident that he was well on his way to a productive career.

8.8.2 The Need for a Different Approach to the Dissertation

As many as one-third of doctoral candidates complete course requirements but never complete the dissertation. The effects of delay in completion are serious even if it is eventually completed. The candidate's original committee, perhaps even the advisor, may no longer be available. The topic may no longer be timely. Others may have done research which goes beyond or replaces what the candidate is doing. Promotion is made difficult. There are lost opportunities for writing and research. The candidates home life and disturbed and work is affected. And even if the completed dissertation is accepted, which it may not be because it's poorly done, the candidate may have little enthusiasm for doing further research.

The advantages of timely, planned completion go beyond turning the negatives above around. A timely completion results in a positive financial payoff for the candidate. A timely completion

allows the candidate to negotiate for employment, especially for schools interested in a candidate with a completed dissertation. A systematic approach assumes the following:

1. A structure of the project that supports a significant improved performance of the dissertation (in terms of topic analyses, proposal documents, plans, schedules, etc.). The gap between an unmanaged dissertation and a well-managed dissertation is extreme. The risk related to completion and acceptance can be greatly reduced by following a systematic approach to managing the dissertation project. Students gain confidence in their ability to structure and manage research if they managed their dissertation well, and ultimately they also become better advisors.

2. The student has primary responsibility for the management of the doctoral dissertation project. A well-managed project is the evidence that the doctoral candidate is capable of independently making a contribution to a field of knowledge. The doctoral dissertation is often the first, large, unstructured project undertaken by a graduate student. The advisor and committee provide much help, but it is the student's project and the student must take responsibility for the initiation, planning, executing, writing and oversight.

3. Faculty (advisor and committee) are a scarce resource and must be managed well. The advisor serves as a guide, critic, facilitator and important source of support. If the advisor performs this role well, the frustrations that the student encounters are minimized.

8.8.2.1 Advisor-Student Roles

The systematic approach assumes a mutual understanding of advisor-student roles. There is a personal implied contract that the advisor will:

- Provide guidance

- Respond to papers given to read within a reasonable time

- Protect the student from unreasonable demands

- Assist the student at those times when the voice of a faculty member advocate is necessary

- Generally aid the student in pursuing the dissertation project

In this relationship, the student is expected to:

- Do whatever he or she says will be done when promised (or explain why it cannot be done)

- Have integrity in research and writing

- Keep in communication

- Prepare documents for comment

- Follow a method of presentation which effectively uses the advisor's and committee's time

- Be reasonable in making demands on the time of the advisor and the committee

- Be open to suggestions and to advice, but also show initiative

Advisors have different advising style and the student needs to get familiar with that style. What is appropriate for one might not be quite right for another. An understanding of the dissertation management approach should improve the relationship between the student and advisor and help to raise the quality of the dissertation.

8.8.3 An Overview of the Dissertation Management Approach

The dissertation aims at demonstrating the competence of the candidate to:

1. Do independent research

2. Make a contribution to knowledge with the research

3. Document the research and make it available to the scholarly community

A doctoral dissertation is the documentation of independent research which makes a contribution to knowledge. It is not just a "bigger paper" than papers students have written in connection with various courses. The median page for a dissertation is about 225 pages with a range that varies from 100 pages to over 800 pages, 50% of which are from 170 pages to 300 pages. Estimates show that the actual effective time (not elapsed time) for doing a doctoral dissertation from start to finish is about 14 work months (2,450 hours) with 50% between 12.5 to 17 work months. Many students take five or more years to complete the dissertation. The quality of the dissertation varies also. The student should take a reasonable attitude toward the quality of the dissertation, and should not view it as his or her magnum opus. It is unlikely that a dissertation will be the highlight of the student's career since it is completed at an early stage of that career.

8.8.3.1 Lifecycle of a Dissertation Project

The dissertation project represents a process of reducing uncertainty. The student begins with the notion of doing research in a broad area of investigations in which there might be thousands of dissertation possibilities, and must reduce that number she is to consider by evaluating closely several topics. One of the topics is selected and is then further defined by the dissertation proposal. Uncertainty is again reduced when a detailed Section outline is prepared. This process may not proceed as smoothly as expected. By working with the committee, the proposal is made sharper and definite until finally the exact task to be performed has been defined. The proportion of time taken for each rough stage are as follows:

Topic search and proposal – 21% (3 work months)

Search prior research – 7% (1 work months)

Research and analysis – 36% (5 work months)

Writing, editing, and proofing – 36% (5 work months)

8.8.3.2 Predissertation Stage Activities

Good management of the dissertation entails the student selecting the general area while course work is being planned. The candidate then uses the courses to do predissertation development. This insures that the necessary course work and statistical and mathematical tools needed for the dissertation project will be available. The student should begin to think of the dissertation well before reaching dissertation stage. The choice should influence the planning of doctoral courses and especially the courses taken outside of the major field, such as research methodology and minor fields or supporting programs.

The topic area is usually very large and very general. No attempt is made at this time to narrow the general area for investigation. For example, the student might find that some research has used survey and interviewing to obtain data about current practices in government and industry, while other investigations have used computer simulation. With this general, the student should take the earliest opportunity to do some investigation and reading in the area, giving special attention to the type of research skills necessary.

The early selection of a research area will allow the candidate to obtain desirable background, do predissertation investigation as part of the coursework requirements, and develop committee contacts among professors who have an interest in the area. The choice of a minor, or supporting program in generally left to the student. Rather than haphazardly selecting a minor, the student should consider the areas that will be needed as support for a future dissertation project. While taking a course in survey methodology, the candidate might use course problems to help in formulating a survey plan for possible use in the dissertation research. The use of course work in predissertation development also exposes the student to potential committee members and to become acquainted with professors interested in the general area. A student should begin, as soon as possible, to compile a dissertation topic file for cogent ideas, together with the supporting evidence that is available at the time.

8.8.3.3 Selection of the Dissertation Topic

Rarely does a student have a topic which is well defined in the beginning. The final topic is iteratively developed. Typically, the initial topic is poorly defined, too general and too large in scope. The topic is expanded into the dissertation proposal, reduced and refined. The student should examine a set of dissertations (or master's thesis) in the general area. These dissertations are now available from online databases (e.g. Dissertation Abstracts International). Search for award-winning dissertations in the candidate's field or related fields, or recent dissertations in at various key universities, or those suggested by faculty and the advisor. In reading dissertations, the student should begin to formulate a general understanding of the structure and scope of a dissertation, and the meaning of contribution to knowledge as applied to the doctoral dissertation. Discussions with other students, faculty and the advisor are also helpful.

No dissertation is perfect. However, certain characteristics should be kept in mind:

1. Need for research – The research should be significant or important, and the student should also feel that it is important, otherwise it should not be conducted. This does not mean the area must have immediate application, rather the topic should not be trivial or of little importance.

2. Amenable to research methods – the topic needs to be feasible regarding both availability of data and of tools for analysis. There are many interesting problems that cannot be researched because no suitable research method or data exists. Some research may not be possible because it infringes government regulation. The student may need to seek approval for research involving human subjects from the authorities.

3. Achievable in reasonable time – The running of experiments, data collection, data analysis, theory formulation, and other activities should be achievable in from four to

eight work months. Time limitations may sometimes be overcome by alternative research methods.

4. Symmetry of potential outcomes – A research project will typically have more than one potential outcome. A research experiment may fail to disprove the hypothesis or it may be inconclusive. The ideal dissertation topic is one in which any of the potential outcomes would be satisfactory in terms of dissertation acceptability. If the experiment or survey is well conducted, and the research analysis are appropriate, confirming or disconfirming the hypothesis both should be interesting. For example, if the goal is to formulate a new algorithm but the algorithm is not found, a contribution has not been made and this represents an asymmetrical outcome.

5. Matches student capabilities and interest – A student who has strong capabilities in the behavioral sciences and low mathematical capabilities should not choose a mathematical dissertation involving proofs and algorithms.

6. Attractive for funding – A student might consider topics that are current and have some unusual approach, which are more likely to obtain funding.

7. Area for professional development – Since the student puts a significant amount of work into becoming knowledgeable on a subject, then the student can make the dissertation a career stepping stone for areas of work. Exploratory research is usually too underdefined to allow a student to demonstrate competency, and it often produces asymmetrical results.

There are several fruitful areas for identifying potential dissertation topics:

1. Current events – Popular journals, new media and magazines often describe problems relating to social welfare, business, economics, education, and government before they become recognized as problems requiring research.

2. Suggestions for research from past dissertations – As soon as a student has an interest in an area, he or she should obtain copies of dissertations that have been written in the area. Not only do writers of dissertations list and describe all previous research in the area, they frequently describe further research which needs to be done.

3. Suggestions for research by authorities in the field – Generally, well-known authorities in the field often comment on the need for research.

4. Expression of need for research by practitioners in a field – Well-known managers in business or professionals in industry may describe areas where there is insufficient work or progress that could be good starting points for research.

5. Generally accepted but unproved suppositions – Every field of knowledge has a large number of suppositions or accepted ideas that no one has ever bothered to test or validate. Research often contain assumptions that have been accepted but might benefit from a re-examination.

6. Unproved or weakly proved assertions by an authority in the field – Authorities in the field frequently will make unproved or weakly proved assertions. These need to be tested and subjected to further analysis. These assumptions can be disproved or strengthened by accumulating evidence from research.

7. Different approaches to testing of important results. If a researcher has reported interesting research results with one research technique and a given research population, a doctoral student may consider replicating the experiment but altering either the research technique or the research population.

When searching for topics, the student should pay attention to the bibliographic chain through which the idea flows – oral transmission, institutional resources, work-in-progress or working papers, unpublished studies, periodicals, reports and monographs, and books –

and the bibliographic control mechanism--the indexing and abstracting services, annual reviews, state of the art reports, bibliographic reviews, annual book lists, and encyclopedic summaries—all work at different levels of the bibliographic chain.

8.8.3.4 The Contribution of a Dissertation

It is difficult to define precisely the meaning of the term "contribution to knowledge." What is acceptable to one university might not be acceptable to another. The dissertation should be based on a significant question, problem or hypothesis. The work should be original and should relate to, explain, solve or add proof to the question, problem or hypothesis. The research adds to knowledge and usually results in the formation of a generalization. The additive contribution may arise from:

1. New or improved evidence – The evidence from a dissertation may disprove or support a concept, theory, or model, or it may add to the understanding of a process.

2. New or improved methodology – The contribution could be a new or improved solution or analysis procedure. Showing the additional benefit of a known procedure may also be a contribution. The improvement should be significant and not, for example in the case of a statistical result, just at the fourth decimal place.

3. New or improved analysis – The analysis may be based on existing evidence or include new data applying historical analysis, implications of a current development in a field, comparative analysis, analysis of an existing theory or concept and its implications.

4. New or improved concepts or theories – This level of improvement is probably the most challenging but also the most significant. An entirely new concept, theory or model may be developed, or an existing concept, theory or model may be enlarged, or extended.

8.8.3.5   Projects Not Generally Accepted as a Dissertation

Literature surveys or descriptive compilations do not meet the contribution-to-knowledge requirement for the dissertation. For example, a good textbook, since it reports the existing state of the art, does not qualify as contribution to knowledge. A literature survey or review, which is discussed in previous Sections, is included as part of the dissertation but cannot be the main contribution of a dissertation. There is some disagreement about the contribution of single-case studies. Unless deep ethnographic methods or interpretive field research methods are applied, single case studies generally do not satisfy the requirements for a dissertation. Development projects which apply known knowledge are usually not thought to fulfill the requirements for dissertation unless there are some comparative results perhaps from using action research methods.

8.8.3.6   Management of Research and Writing

The student should draw up a schedule for completion, and show how much time is available to be spent on various stages. The candidate should use various methods for improving the working relationship with the advisor and committee including written documentation, summaries of meetings and discussions, Section outlines, and meeting agenda's and minutes.

8.8.4 Selection of an Advisor and Dissertation Committee

The advisor is the most powerful and influential part of the progress of the candidate, so students must choose wisely if given the choice. The ideal advisor should:

1. Be interested in the topic

2. Know enough of the topic

3. Have a reasonable expectation of what the student is capable of

4. Read and comment on dissertation documents within a reasonable period of time

5. Be constant on list of requirements and not add requirements unnecessarily

6. Have personal integrity

7. Be interested in the candidate as a person and is compatible with the candidate

8. Demonstrate good past performance with other candidates

Both the advisor and committee can take pride in the good work of the advisee. The ideal committee member follows the same list of requirements and provides skills supportive to the candidate and complement the advisor. The advisee must be comfortable with the committee. Research has shown that both the advisor and the committee play a major role in advancing the career of the candidate.

8.8.5 The Dissertation Proposal

Students seem to have the most difficulty in the preparation of a dissertation proposal outlining the research. It is a difficult activity, but one that is crucial in order to achieve the objective of timely completion. The proposal represents the blueprints for the dissertation; if it is clear and well done, the work can proceed with assurance; if in complete and unclear, there is likely to be considerable misdirected effort.

Since the process of preparing a dissertation proposal is iterative, the student should prepare a proposal and solicit reactions from the advisor, committee and colleagues. Based on their comments, the student prepares a revision. This is criticized and a new revision is prepared. There may be an opportunity for the candidate to present the proposal to a seminar. The comments should result in further revision and the process should continue until the proposal becomes a clear and crisp definition of the research project.

8.8.5.1 Topic Analysis Form

In the topic formulation stage, a topic analysis form is recommended to support this iterative process. It should be quite short—two or four pages should be sufficient. The part of the topic analysis form is as follows:

1. Problem or question – states what the dissertation is about and what compelling question it addresses.

   a. E.g. Decision models are built to handle risk aversion but human decision makers are erratic in risk aversion responses. The research could ask about:

      i. What are the major determinants of variations in the risk aversion behavior by human decision makers?

      ii. Is relative risk aversion constant among problem situations?

      iii. Can education reduce variations in risk aversion?

   b. The 3rd question is the one to be researched.

2. Importance of the research – Is the research significant enough? The importance of a dissertation may not need to be earth-shaking, but no dissertation should deal with a trivial topic

   a. In the design of decision systems, risk aversion is not considered although research has shown that decision models become less effective because of variations in risk aversion. Burnham states that there is a need to understand how risk aversion works because it impacts the efficacy of new decision systems.

3. Significant prior research – It need not be exhaustive when topics are selected, but it should contain major research on the topic.

      a. ABC reported so-and-so and risk aversion, DEF reported that X impacts risk aversion. No reported research has been found on the impact of education on risk aversion.

4. Possible research approach or methodology – This section outlines how the student proposes to approach the research and suggest alternative ways it can be accomplished.

      a. Use a group of students and evaluate risk aversion before and after taking a course

      b. Use a group of inventory controllers taking a course in inventory management.

      c. Use a group of students and measure change before and after taking an inventory management course.

      d. Instruments: A instrument to measure risk aversion needs to be constructed.

5. Potential outcomes of research and importance of each – for each research approach, the different but possible outcomes should be described (e.g. Significant positive and negative correlation demonstrating the relationship, lack of correlation, inability to obtain satisfactory response)

      a. Immediate effect of education

      b. Six month's effect of education

      c. Effect of simulated experience

8.8.5.2 The proposal

The topic analysis form makes it short so that it would be feasible to prepare several alternative topics. It is an expansion of the topic analysis form and will be used as a work plan for the dissertation. A complete final proposal might contain 10 to 30 pages. The structure is approximately as follows:

1. Summary (1-2 pages)

2. Problem, question and hypothesis (1-3 pages)

3. Importance of topic (1-2 pages)

4. Prior research on topic (1-7 pages)

5. Research approach or research methodology (2-8 pages)

6. Limitations and key assumptions (1-2 pages)

7. Contribution to knowledge (1- 3 pages)

8. Description of proposal Sections in dissertation (2-3 pages) –Each Section can be described in terms of hits major headings, or by a short paragraph describing what will be covered in that Section.

   a. Introduction – The general problem area, the specific problem and question, why the topic is important, research approach, limitations and key assumptions and contributions to be made.

   b. Literature review

   c. Description of research methodology

   d. Research results

   e. Analysis of the results

   f. Summary and conclusion

References

This research writing guide gathers materials taken from the following texts and references and uses excerpts from them. Please refer to them for complete guidance.

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